UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Producing Responsibility:

The Role of Campaigns in Subpresidential Elections

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

In Political Science

by

Christopher Charles Blunt

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Dedicated to

Alana, Cyprian and Mary Grace

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Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Producing Responsibility:
The Role of Campaigns in Subpresidential Elections

by

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This dissertation examines the role of campaigns in statewide elections. I argue that such campaigns serve three important functions: activating latent preferences, building informed perceptions of candidates, and connecting these preferences and perceptions with the vote decision. The dissertation documents and discusses the manner in which campaigns target, educate, and mobilize sometimes-diverse groups of voters — and lead those voters to make connections between disparate preferences. In so doing, I contend, subpresidential campaigns are instrumental in bringing about the "responsible electorate" of which V.O. Key wrote.

The bulk of previous research has focused on the individual-level effect of campaign communication, or on aggregate shifts in campaign information flows, in *presidential* campaigns, and has determined that campaign activity impacts voter preferences only at the margins. Comparatively little research has explored the degree to which *sub*presidential campaigns shape voting behavior.

My own dissertation draws on a vast archive of statewide survey data, conducted over the course of six election cycles in a wide variety of states. These data were supplied by the campaign consulting firms involved in the races in question. The analysis confirms much of the previous research on presidential campaign effects, but then demonstrates the important ways in which subpresidential campaigns differ in the results they produce.

I find that campaigns serve the important public service function of helping voters organize candidate choices and connect those choices with other political and ideological preferences. In the presence of a contested, two-sided campaign, voters grow more informed about the candidates or ballot measures in question, and make choices which are more consistent with other preferences. When campaign activity is lacking, voters behave more randomly. The dissertation explores in depth the degree to which campaigns shape voter perceptions of candidates and issues over time, and the manner in which these “informed perceptions” are in turn connected with voting. I find that voters in subpresidential races tend to be more open to "learning" about the individual candidates, forming independent impressions of those candidates, and connecting impressions with vote decisions in a manner which is less closely tied to one's partisan predispositions than in presidential races.

CHAPTER 1

STUDYING VOTING BEHAVIOR AND CAMPAIGN EFFECTS

V.O. Key explained that the "perverse and unorthodox argument" of *The Responsible Electorate* (1966) is that "voters are not fools." (p. 7). He went on to contend that "to be sure, many individual voters act in odd ways indeed; yet in the large the electorate behaves about as rationally and responsibly as we should expect, given the clarity of the alternatives presented to it and the character of the information available to it." The American electorate, he insisted, is moved by concerns about central and relevant questions of public policy, of governmental performance, and of executive personality.

The contention that voters are rational actors who make the best use of the information available to them is not a new one. Downs, (1957) Himmelweit et al. (1985), Page and Shaprio (1991), and many others have explored the degree to which voters are reasonable people who make the best decisions they can with the information at their disposal. This dissertation will use a variety of novel data sources to demonstrate the manner in which, and the circumstances under which, *subpresidential campaign activity* serves as a key mechanism in producing this more rational and "responsible" electorate.

Measuring Campaign Effects

By and large, academic researchers have been skeptical about the impact of campaign activity on voter preferences. This skepticism dates back to the earliest studies of voting behavior and campaign effects, which were conducted by Columbia University researchers and presented in the classic *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1944) and *Voting* (Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954). The first of these studies examined 3,000 voters in Erie County, Ohio; all respondents were interviewed in May of 1940, and smaller panel samples were reinterviewed over the course of the presidential campaign. At the same time, researchers made careful note of the content of events in the campaign and local media coverage of it. It was thought that changes in the electorate's preferences over time would correspond to changes in the content of campaign communication.

In fact, however, the Columbia researchers found almost no change in voter preferences over time. Only eight percent converted from one presidential candidate to the other; for most voters, the campaign simply reinforced their initial loyalties. A person's social group memberships and ties had a much stronger influence on his vote than did information received in the campaign. The later study, reported in *Voting,* used a similar methodology during the 1948 campaign season but again found little change in voter preferences. As Alvarez (1997) and Iyengar and Kinder (1987) note, this finding of non-change led to what many political scientists call the "minimal effects" model: the belief that campaign activity influences mass preferences only at the margins.

The "Michigan model," developed by Campbell and his colleagues at the University of Michigan in the 1950s, reinforced the notion that vote choice is determined by factors outside and independent of campaign-specific communications. In their seminal work, *The American Voter* (1960), the Michigan researchers argued that partisanship (party identification) was not only the key driver of vote choice, it was also a critical shaper of candidate evaluations and issue preferences. Very little of the variance in Presidential voting behavior remained unexplained once these direct and indirect effects of party identification were taken into account.

Emerging from these early studies is a picture of an electorate which reflexively arrives at candidate choices through social group memberships or party identification; a deep psychological or social attachment, rather than the events of a specific campaign, drive the vote. Contemporary political scientists have remained generally skeptical about the impact of campaigns. Given the types of impacts sought, it has not been difficult to amass evidence that presidential campaigns fail to persuade or convert voters to change sides. Much of the campaign effects literature evaluates the impact of campaign activity on election outcomes or pre-election poll standings. Campaigns are considered to be effective to the extent that they influence turnout or the choice of candidate.

The prevailing view among scholars is that campaigns often exert little net influence over election outcomes *per se*; structural and retrospective factors often seem to play a much larger role (see, among others, Markus, 1988; Bartells, 1992, 1997; Gelman and King, 1993). In presidential elections, perceived incumbent job performance has been one of the most robust and reliable predictors of the vote (Abramowitz, 1988; 1996; Brody and Sigelman, 1983). Incumbent job performance ratings, in turn, are greatly shaped by perceptions of the state of the economy and the relative peace and prosperity that the nation enjoys. Not surprisingly, a long literature has found a close association between perceptions of incumbent job performance, objective measures of economic performance, and the outcome of national elections. (Lewis-Beck and Rice, 1992; Campbell, 1992; Greene, 1993). Lewis-Beck and Rice, for example, have used incumbent job approval ratings and economic growth statistics to build election prediction models which are strikingly accurate. If objective measures of economic growth and the electorate's approval of presidential performance can accurately forecast outcomes months in advance, this seems to leave little room for the maneuvering of candidates to influence those outcomes.

Individual-level studies of voting behavior have provided considerable evidence of strong connections between the vote and incumbent evaluations, the voter's personal economic condition, and (especially) perceptions of the national economy. V.O. Key (1966) was one of the first to build up this theory of retrospective voting, showing that deviation from past partisan vote patterns is rational, and even “responsible,” because these deviations are usually in line with voter preferences and evaluations of incumbent performance.

Fiorina’s (1978, 1981) work stands as another classic early statement of retrospective voting, and myriad other studies have strengthened his original findings. Alvarez and Nagler (1998) showed that perceptions of macro economic performance were a much stronger vote driver in the 1996 presidential election than were candidate issue positions; this leaves candidates free to hedge or obfuscate issue positions, while redirecting the electorate’s attention to measures of economic performance. Collectively, these studies and many more (including Alvarez and Nagler, 1995; see also Abramson et al., 1994 and 1998 and Miller and Shanks, 1996 for more general discussions) have established “retrospective voting” as a predominant explanation of voter decision processes and election dynamics.

It should be pointed out that there is an endogeneity problem with using incumbent job performance ratings as a predictor of election outcomes. Those who are already attached to a particular candidate may justify their support by saying they approve of his job performance; those who give support to a challenger may justify their support by saying the economy has performed poorly. Sears and Lau (1983) strongly suggest that some of the correlation between such performance measures is in fact based on such methodological artifacts as question order making such factors salient during the interview.

Despite some questions about the direction of the causal arrow, the prevailing view among scholars is that campaigns matter comparatively little; structural and retrospective factors exert a much greater influence on election outcomes than do campaigns. The predispositional and structural variables emphasized by the retrospective voting theory are in place well before a campaign even begins and, it is generally believed, extremely difficult to alter. If campaigns play a role, it is precisely because they remind voters about partisan ties and build that case about incumbent performance. To be sure, there would be a dramatic effect if one side failed to campaign. But presidential contests are fairly evenly matched in talent and resources, a veritable "all star game" of elections where each side fields its very best operatives. The net effect of this "clash of the titans" is negligible, leaving structural and retrospective factors to determine outcomes.

Priming Effects

Despite the ability to forecast election outcomes using models that ignore campaign-related occurrences, campaign efforts are not necessarily useless. At minimum, campaigns need to remind voters about economic conditions and connect blame or responsibility for these conditions to the incumbent (and his party). There is substantial evidence that the principal effect of campaigns is to activate ("prime") and mobilize predispositions such as party identification and perceptions of incumbent job performance. Finkel (1993), for example, used panel data to demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of individual votes can be accounted for from attitudes (such as party identification and presidential approval) that are measured well before the political conventions. Campaigns win few converts; rather campaigns simply activate existing predispositions and connect these with the vote choice. Holbrook (1996) found something similar in his study of presidential campaigns. Campaign effects were greatest for candidates whose initial level of support lagged behind its predicted level (based on such baseline variables as partisanship, the incumbent's popularity, and the state of the economy); leading to the conclusion that campaigns activate preferences associated with basic predispositions such as partisanship and incumbent evaluations.

Gelman and King (1993) found that additional information enables voters to choose more in accord with their preferences. Similarly, Bartels (1996) demonstrated that less-informed voters make candidate choices which are less in accord with their preferences than do fully-informed voters. From this research, it stands to reason that more information would help voters make choices which are more in accord with their preferences; to the extent that campaigns could supply this information, campaign activity should serve as an important driver of voter consistency.

Is Presidential Campaign Research a Drunkard's Search?

The "activation" and "retrospective" models together provide a fairly comprehensive portrait of voting behavior; it has been difficult to document the degree to which campaign-generated information does more than simply connect voters with pre-existing dispositions. It is possible, however, that additional campaign effects have been hard to uncover because researchers have not been examining the right kinds of campaigns. Samuel Popkin (1991), in *The Reasoning Voter*, makes extensive use of a device called the "Drunkard's Search" in explaining voting behavior. Voters, he argues, often behave like drunkards searching for their car keys under a street light — because that is where the light is best (but is not necessarily where they lost the keys). To some extent, however, political scientists may sometimes engage in the same behavior: looking for campaign effects in presidential races because that is where the data are best. Sometimes substantial effects are observed, but many times they are not.

The near-exclusive focus on presidential elections can give a misleading impression of campaigns and their role in American elections. Presidential elections are unique in many respects --- most notably because they feature well-known candidates, generate extensive campaign activity on both sides, and attract enormous media coverage.

There are additional potential limitations in studying presidential elections. The short time frame during which data are collected presents one serious problem. Most National Election Studies (NES), the typical dataset for studying these campaigns, begin their field work around the September 1st traditional kickoff date for presidential campaigning. Fifty years ago the election might have been significantly shaped during the sixty or so days between Labor Day and the election, but the modern system of "permanent" campaigns has created an environment in which most voters arrive at their presidential candidate choice well before the end of summer. The small changes that occur after that date – even if they tip the balance – may be too small for surveys to detect. Furthermore, the massive media coverage given to presidential races, and the tremendous resources marshaled by advocates on both sides, guarantees that candidates will become extremely well known and closely identified with the partisan team each man represents. If, as seems true for many voters, *what it means* to identify oneself as a "Democrat" or "Republican" is embodied by one's Presidential vote, there can be formidable cognitive barriers to receiving and objectively weighing information about the opposing party's nominee.

Although the overwhelming majority of elections takes place at the state and local levels, and these elections would seem an excellent place to look for campaign effects, state and local elections have received relatively little attention from political scientists — largely because reliable data have proved difficult to obtain. However, there is good reason to think subpresidential elections would show more effects of campaigns than presidential contests do.

Above all, the partisan cognitive barriers to defection are not as high in subpresidential elections. If a person calls himself a "Democrat," there is automatically a great pressure on the person to support the party's presidential nominee, because not to do so would betray the meaning of that self-identification as a Democrat to a much greater degree than would defecting to a Republican candidate for, say, attorney general. Party identification likely constrains voters' willingness to investigate, receive, and act upon information from opposition presidential nominees much more than it constrains willingness to consider and weigh information from opposition candidates for secretary of state or governor.

Furthermore, subpresidential campaigns are often less well matched in quality. Also, unlike presidential elections, there is seldom massive media attention to state and local candidates, which could serve to settle the question before formal campaigns even begin. In the modern era of presidential campaigns, more than a year of effort, publicity, and press attention are invested in the campaign before the “official” campaign begins on Labor Day weekend. Both candidates are well known and impressions are settled. This is generally not true in statewide elections, even when an incumbent is seeking reelection. With candidates not as well known and opinions not as firmly crystallized on Day One, more room is left open for “learning” over the course of the subpresidential campaign period.

In fact, the literature which has examined subpresidential voting behavior has found that there are some substantial campaign effects which are more visible than in national elections. For example, the fate of incumbent governors does not seem to be as closely tied to the state of the economy as is the fate of incumbent presidents (Stein, 1990); this would seem to leave governors more free to campaign on issues of their own choosing. Salmore and Salmore (1994) demonstrate that there are many dynamic elements in statewide elections, and give numerous anecdotal accounts of campaign impacts on outcomes.

Franklin (1991) provides further evidence that Senate candidates affect the clarity of voter perceptions through campaign strategies; incumbents who stress issues increase the clarity of voter perceptions, while challengers’ attacks on incumbents reduce clarity. Franklin concludes that candidate strategies are an important factor in election outcomes.

Furthermore, Wright and Berkman (1986) suggest that voters react to the issue positions Senate candidates present them with and vote in line with policy preferences. This implies that over the course of a campaign, some learning occurs about where candidates stand on substantive issues — and voters sort themselves out according to those preferences.

Mark Westlye (1991) identifies the *intensity* of campaign activity in Senate races as an important determinant of voting behavior. He uses state-level survey data to examine in more detail the manner in which the intensity of campaign activity shapes electorates' perceptions of candidates — and ultimately influences election outcomes. Voters in states with high-intensity senate races receive much more complete information about the candidates than do voters in states with noncompetitive senate campaigns. Voters in the latter states are much more likely to make a decision based solely on party identification or incumbency; voters in the former are much better able to weigh the merits of the competing candidates.

In one of the most important recent examinations of subpresidential elections, Kahn and Kenney (1999) find that U.S. Senate campaigns are profoundly important in shaping and ordering voter preferences. Reinforcing Westlye's findings, they demonstrate that in competitive, two-sided campaigns, voters are engaged by the discourse and become significantly more educated about their choices as Election Day approaches. Political issues become clearly defined, and the electorate responds. As the authors conclude (p. 241), “A competitive campaign environment, characterized by a plethora of information about the competing candidates, can encourage political novices to consider the candidates’ ideological and issue positions when making decisions at the ballot box. Such sophisticated decisions by political novices are simply not possible in less competitive settings. Alterations in the political setting powerfully influence what people know about the political contestants and how they choose between competitors.”

The purpose of this dissertation is twofold. First, it will provide a detailed look at the way in which campaigns activate partisan and issue predispositions. The use of time series data, joined to accounts of campaign activities, from across each of several election cycles in several states, will shed light on the *processes and mechanisms* which produce activation effects. These data will flesh out details of activation which are difficult to discern in simple “before/after” studies such as the NES. This dissertation will draw upon cross-sectional statewide data to detail the manner in which campaigns shape these perceptions over time and lead the electorate to cast votes which are ultimately in line with other preferences. In this, the dissertation makes no argument with past research. Rather, the data and analysis will provide new insights into the *process* by which the electorate becomes “responsible” in the choices it makes.

Secondly, it is quite likely that at the state and local level, campaigns do more than simply activate predispositions. Given that candidates are generally less well-known and resources generally less well-matched than in presidential contests, campaigns may produce “extra-activation” effects which previous research has been unable to detect. The dissertation will examine these in detail, and will conclude that statewide campaigns do produce effects beyond simple activation of predispositions. At the state and local level, successful campaigns construct winning coalitions by building on a partisan base — but then expanding that base and building candidate perceptions which *transcend* partisanship. Rather than “revert” to partisanship in the face of low information, state electorates can be shaped by campaigns to form perceptions of candidates which are *independent* of partisanship and exert more of an influence on vote decisions than does partisanship alone. Broadly speaking, in addition to activating predispositions, modern subpresidential campaigns attempt to shape perceptions of candidates (above and beyond the influence of party identification) and lead voters to use these “informed perceptions” in voting decisions.

It should be noted that many studies of subpresidential voting behavior limit themselves to campaigns for U.S. Senate or campaigns for governor. Such a limitation can be useful for research, because it acts as a natural control. The purpose of this dissertation is to identify dynamics at work in subpresidential campaigns generally, however, and often to contrast those dynamics with what is found in presidential campaigning. For this reason, the dissertation will examine races for senate, governor, state attorney general, other constitutional offices (such as secretary of state), judgeships, state legislature, and even ballot measures.

Above all, the dissertation will explore the ability of voters to organize choices and connect varying preferences when given differing amounts of information about those choices. I hypothesize that when voters are exposed to greater campaign activity, and therefore have a greater probability of information exposure, they will organize their choices more coherently. When campaign activity is lacking, voters should behave more randomly and seem less able to organize choices.

Modeling Campaign Effects

This dissertation conceptualizes the role of campaigns in statewide elections to be one of “producing responsibility.” I posit that early in a campaign cycle, many voters may express preferences for candidates which are based largely (or even solely) on partisanship, what is known about only one of the candidates (usually the incumbent), or some purely idiosyncratic consideration (such as cues evoked by one of the candidates’ names, even though nothing of substance is in fact known about either candidate). Early in the cycle, only small numbers of voters express a preference based on a thoughtful consideration of the merits of both candidates. The principal effect of campaign activity is to provide voters with additional information about both candidates. The dissertation will demonstrate the degree to which, and the circumstances under which, voters absorb and digest this campaign-generated information and in fact arrive at a vote choice which is more firmly grounded on the merits of both candidates.

In the process of producing a more “responsible” electorate, the respective campaigns may or may not shift the respective candidates’ shares of the overall vote. The effectiveness of particular campaign tactics in producing a winning candidate is only a peripheral interest of this dissertation. The focus of the analysis will be on the *structure* of the vote, and how this structure changes over time, rather than on the *balance* of the vote *per se.*

The vote decision can be modeled as a function of four factors: candidate favorability, retrospective evaluations of incumbent performance, prospective ability of candidates to handle issues, and party identification. Considerable past research has discussed the ultimate relationship between these perceptions and Presidential voting behavior (Campbell et al, 1960; Brody and Page, 1973; Kelley and Mirer, 1974; Page and Jones, 1979; Kelley, 1983). This dissertation will detail the manner in which campaigns bring about, over the course of an election cycle, that mix of vote drivers.

As a first step, all partisan campaigns attempt to activate partisanship and maintain the loyalty of co-partisans. But the reality is that in many states, no one party has a majority of identifiers (Erikson, Wright and McIver, 1993); in other words, partisanship alone is rarely enough to forge a majority coalition. Although most legislative campaigns, which are conducted in highly-gerrymandered districts, can safely emphasize more purely partisan themes, statewide campaigns usually must do more than this.

A campaign therefore appeals to independents and opposing partisans with messages focusing on incumbent performance, the importance of issues, and personal qualities of the candidates themselves. The critical next step is leading those with favorable or unfavorable candidate evaluations and impressions of issue-handling ability *to translate those perceptions into votes.* As campaigns wear on, there should be an increasingly strong connection between impressions and votes.

Party identification should be the dominant vote driver early in an election cycle, when candidates are relatively unknown and choices are largely a function of voter partisanship. As the cycle progresses, and as partisanship is activated, partisanship should exert an increasingly stronger influence over vote choices. However, candidate favorability, job performance, and issue handling ability should also grow more important —

and perhaps even eclipse partisanship — in the vote choice. Especially when an incumbent is seeking re-election, other retrospective factors should also grow more important as each campaign seeks to tie to the incumbent what is favorable and unfavorable about the status quo. Collectively, all of these factors should account for an increasingly large share of variance in the vote as time goes by. Early on, there may be many “errors” or mismatches between candidate perceptions and vote choice. The campaign process should serve to eliminate these errors and mismatches.

This dissertation argues that when errors and mismatches diminish over time, voters are learning to choose candidates based on their underlying impressions of the candidates. It is possible, however, that the causal arrow also points in the other direction. As election day approaches, those who say they are voting for a particular candidate may feel pressured to say that they also have favorable feelings toward the candidate (and unfavorable feelings toward his opponent). For whatever reason, the voter may decide to support a particular candidate. The longer he remains attached to that candidate, and the more identified with the candidate he becomes, the more positive his feelings for that candidate grow. Without panel data, which would track the same individuals over time, it is difficult to determine which way the causal arrow points. Regardless, however, *the mere fact of increasing consistency,* as a result of campaign activity, would be an important finding in itself.

My analysis will identify broad trends in the changing mix of these vote-driving factors over the course of each of several election cycles. As noted above, I would expect partisanship to be most important at the beginning of a campaign period. As the campaign progresses, the effects of party identification should become increasingly indirect, as partisanship influences candidate impressions and retrospective evaluations (and exerts absolutely more but relatively less of a direct impact on the vote *per se*). Collectively, all of these factors (including party identification) should account for an increasing share of the variance as election day approaches. But as both campaigns seek to attract independents and opposing partisans, partisanship should grow gradually less important *relative* to candidate evaluations (even taking into account the indirect effects of party identification).

The other general effect of campaigns, which also builds coalitions which transcend partisanship, is in priming the electorate and setting an issue agenda. It is quite possible for trial heat results to be largely flat over the course of an election period, but for campaigns still to have an enormous effect on voters. Examining aggregate trial heat data can give a misleading impression of the amount of total change which has occurred in the electorate. Campaigns rarely broadcast the same general message to all members of the electorate. Opposing campaigns often use starkly different themes to target different groups of voters with widely disparate issue agendas. These messages may also vary by media market; urban voters might be told about a candidate's support for gun control, while attacks on the opponent's support for flag burning might be used in rural markets. As these messages, from both sides, inform members of target groups about candidate issue stances and records, many voters may indeed change sides. The *net* effect of these changes, however, may be very small — and therefore hard to perceive with aggregate data.

Given that modern candidates identify and target specific groups with specific messages, campaigns may have some agenda setting and priming effects. In studying the impact of modern campaigns, therefore, it is important to identify specific "issue publics" within the general electorate and investigate vote trends among members of these issue publics.

This is not a new argument; a long literature exists documenting the priming and framing effects of campaign activity. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) demonstrated that by calling attention to some issues and ignoring others, television news coverage can alter the standards by which public officials and candidates are judged. Similarly, Krosnick and Kinder (1990) found that the more the public is primed with information about a particular issue, the more citizens will incorporate what they know about that issue into their overall judgement of the president.

Candidates themselves can also prime electorates by emphasizing certain issues and ignoring others. Petrocik's (1996) analysis of the 1980 election found that candidate preferences increasingly coincided with the issues and problems about which voters were concerned. A related analysis of the 1988 election showed that Bush’s persistent emphasis on the peace and prosperity of the Reagan years caused voters’ evaluations of the state of the country to become increasingly correlated with their vote intention -- a shift which moved Bush from a deficit in May to a lead by the middle of the summer (Petrocik and Steeper, 1989).

Iyengar and Kinder (1987: 64) offer an important description of the psychological process by which priming occurs. Voters cannot pay attention to every detail of every issue; to do so is physically impossible. Because of this limitation, they argue, the impressions we draw of others tend to be limited and focused around a small number of themes which are most important and most accessible to us. It follows that voters will draw on the most personally relevant and accessible information in forming judgements of candidates and office holders.

If campaigns have a *priming* effect, as an issue gets more attention, the people saying that issue is important should increasingly *use it as a voting issue.* Early in the cycle, there should be a minimal relationship between vote choice and belief that a particular issue is important for government to address. As the campaigns generate information about which issues each candidate will focus on addressing if elected, those most concerned about each issue will gravitate toward “their” issue’s champion.

If campaign activity and coverage has an agenda-setting effect, spikes in discussion of certain issues should lead to an increased number of voters saying those issues are high priorities. If there is no agenda-setting effect, the number of people saying those issues are important should remain relatively constant. If there is an effect, changes in perceived importance of an issue should parallel changes in the volume of discussion of that issue.

I strongly suspect that priming effects will be substantial, and that agenda-setting effects will be minimal. It should be difficult for campaigns to manipulate what is important to individual voters. I argue that, by contrast, campaigns matter most in making issues which are *already* important *more relevant to the voting decision* and leading those voters who already believe a particular issue is important to *use that issue when deciding among candidates.* I would hypothesize that as an election season progresses and as particular campaigns emphasize different issues, voters will increasingly sort themselves out according to their issue concerns. For example, suppose one campaign emphasizes gun control and the other emphasizes tax cuts. As the election nears, those in the gun control constituency should side increasingly with the candidate who has been discussing gun control --- and vice versa for the tax cut constituency. This effect should persist above and beyond partisanship; i.e. be more than a simple matter of Republicans siding with the tax cutting candidate and Democrats siding with the gun control candidate.

The Normal Vote

The analysis will frequently reference the “normal vote” as an investigative tool. Philip Converse (1966) first introduced the concept of a “normal” or “expected” Democratic vote percent, from which deviations in individual elections could be computed. This separates out and quantifies the degree to which short term forces acted upon an electorate (or particular subgroups within the electorate) to produce a result different from what would be expected if all voters simply voted the strength of partisanship alone. Converse computed, for each of the standard seven party identification groups, the probability of a Democratic vote. Thus, based on the person’s strength of party identification, each respondent in a survey is assigned a Democratic vote probability. These probabilities can then be computed for particular demographic groups, allowing analysis of how each group’s actual Democratic vote percent deviates from the *expected* Democratic vote. This deviation becomes a measure of the strength of short-term forces acting on particular groups in the electorate.

Although it has since been demonstrated (Achen, 1979) that Converse's computation of these probabilities was methodologically flawed, the general concept of a "normal" or "expected" vote remains a useful one. John Petrocik (1989) revisited Converse's idea with new data and a methodologically sound computation of expected vote probabilities. Petrocik estimated that when short-term forces are equal, partisan groups have the following expected Republican vote percents[1]:

Strong Democrats	15.2%
Weak Democrats	31.1%
Leaning Democrats	30.5%
Independents	51.8%
Leaning Republicans	70.7%
Weak Republicans	72.5%
Strong Republicans	81.8%
Total Electorate	*47.2%*

As noted, these percents represent the expected Republican share of the two-party vote *when short term forces in the election are equal.* It follows, therefore, that when a candidate's *actual* share of the two party vote deviates significantly from what would be *expected* from partisanship alone, some kind of other short term force — independent of partisanship — is acting upon the electorate to move voters toward one candidate or the other.

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[1] The actual expected percents used in my later data analysis differ slightly from those reported here. In a personal communication from Petrocik, he explained that he now includes an adjustment factor for black and Jewish respondents. Both groups have consistently lower probabilities of Republican voting than do other groups, and the normal vote is therefore adjusted slightly downward for both groups.

The normal vote, therefore, can be a powerful analytical tool for identifying when and to what degree voters have been impacted by the events of a campaign. The deviation from normal voting can be computed[2] for every demographic subgroup in a survey, and these deviations can be compared both across subgroups and across time. Often, for example, one candidate in a statewide race begins the campaign extremely well known and liked in one particular region but remains largely unknown elsewhere. Early in the election cycle, such a candidate might do much better than normal in his home region and much worse than normal in other regions. In this case, the "short term force" impacting the electorate is the limited geographic exposure of one particular candidate. As the campaign wears on, and both candidates gain exposure in all regions of the state, the deviations from normal voting should begin to even out across the disparate regions. The degree to which they do so, and the speed with which they do so, becomes a measure of the candidate's effectiveness in broadening his appeal beyond the home base.

The normal vote also serves as an effective control for partisan differences in the sample composition of different cross sectional surveys. For example, suppose that a Republican candidate is winning 40 percent of the Catholic vote at Time 1 and 50 percent of the Catholic vote at Time 2. It is possible that the candidate increased his appeal among Catholics. It is also possible, however, that the Catholics sampled at Time 2 just happened to be significantly more Republican than the Catholics sampled at Time 1. By examining deviations from normal voting, rather than raw vote percents, the analyst can draw more reliable conclusions as to the effects of campaign activity. In this case, if the candidate's deviation from normal voting among Catholics increased from -2 to +9, it could be concluded reliably that some short term force had acted upon Catholics in the intervening time to move them closer to the Republican. If, on the other hand, the deviation had changed only marginally (from -2 to parity, for example), it could be concluded that nothing special — above and beyond the effects of partisanship — had acted upon Catholics *per se* in the interim.[3]

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[2] For each subgroup of interest, the deviation is computed by subtracting the *normal* (or "expected") Republican share of the two-party vote the *actual* Republican share of the two-party.

For this reason, the dissertation will often utilize the normal vote (or, more particularly, deviations from normal voting) as an analytical tool to identify the effects of campaign activity on voters. In measuring deviations from normal partisan voting, it is possible to identify the degree to which short term forces may be acting upon particular subsets of the electorate. As will be discussed in later chapters, deviations from normal voting can be a measure of the degree to which certain voters have successfully gathered substantive information about the competing candidates and incorporated that information into the vote calculus.

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[3] It is also possible, of course, that events in the intervening campaign had acted to make Catholics more Democratic in party identification. An example might be the 1960 Presidential campaign, when Catholics became more closely identified with the Democratic party over time as a result of John F. Kennedy's campaign. In such a case, one could observe more Catholic Democrats between the two samples, such that the departure from the normal vote would be constant in the 40 percent and 50 percent measurement. This would occur with a muddled party identification shift that keeps a variable from being associated with a deviation in the vote because the vote intention was partly absorbed in a swing in party identification effects. For this reason, it is important to note large changes in the normal vote that particular groups might evidence over time, and ask if such a shift in macropartisanship might be occurring as a result of the campaign itself. In very few instances examined in this dissertation, however, does the normal vote of a given subgroup change significantly over time. Examining deviations from normal voting rather serves to dampen the inevitable "noise" that occurs over time due to sampling error.

The dissertation does not dispute that party identification is an important driver of voting behavior, or that one important function of campaign activity is to prime party identification and make it more relevant to the vote. Indeed, I will present evidence that partisanship remains an extremely important factor in voting (especially at the Presidential level, but even at the state level). However, the dissertation will go on to document the degree to which, and the circumstances under which, campaigns impact voters independently of party and lead voters to use extra-partisan considerations in the polling booth.

Data and Methodology

The dissertation relies on two major sources of data, the details of which will be discussed in each relevant chapter. Both sources are quite novel, and provide considerable insight into the impact of campaign activity on voting behavior. The first set of data, used extensively in Chapter 3, consists of a quarter of a million actual ballot images cast in Los Angeles County. They provide a literal “look over the shoulder” of voters in races with widely varying amounts of campaign activity.

The second set of data consists of cross sectional statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc.[4] on behalf of Republican candidates for public office. The data cover entire election cycles in a wide variety of states and for several different offices: President, Governor, U.S. Senator, Attorney General, and others. I have worked closely with Mr. Fred Steeper, one of the principals of Market Strategies, for eleven of the twelve previous years and under his direction was responsible for the design, management, execution and analysis of much of this research.

The Market Strategies data are invaluable for studying the effects of campaigns on voters, because they were gathered as actual campaigns were in progress and measure attitudes of direct relevance to the candidates. From an academic researcher’s perspective, however, these data have two important shortcomings. First, the surveys are not always consistent, across time and across races, in the questions asked. Survey length was heavily influenced by cost considerations, and questions — especially demographic measures — not directly relevant were often omitted. This inconsistency sometimes makes direct comparisons across races less than optimal.

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[4] Market Strategies is a widely-respected, national Republican research firm headquartered in Michigan.

Secondly, and more problematic, are confidentiality concerns. Although some of Mr. Steeper's clients have retired from politics, many more remain active in public life. Naturally, the latter are concerned about preserving the confidentiality of their data. Following the lead of *The People's Choice* (1944) and other works, I must at times disguise the identities of candidates and locations[5].

Overview and Organization

Before launching into the detailed analysis of voting behavior conducted later in the dissertation, Chapter 2 establishes the manner in which campaign organizations themselves design and utilize strategic information. This chapter begins with a discussion of the variables and attitudes which campaign organizations believe they can influence; it goes on to describe in detail the ways strategic information is employed to work this influence. A central argument of this chapter — and the remainder of the dissertation — is that by advancing its own interests (the winning of office), a campaign's activities have the collateral effect of producing a more informed electorate that is better able to organize its preferences. Chapter 2 demonstrates that candidates seek office aggressively and with the intention of winning; they do not run campaigns with the intention of simply educating voters.[6] At the same time, however, the chapter will draw attention to aspects of campaign activity and strategic information research which are very likely to have the collateral effect of producing greater voter consistency.

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[5] The authors of *The People's Choice* identified the location of their study as "Erie County, Ohio." In deference to local officials, they did not name the actual town where the research was conducted.

It will be stressed many times in this dissertation that while campaigns can and do influence election outcomes, determining winning and losing strategies is only a peripheral focus of this research (and is not the purpose even of Chapter 2). From a normative and empirical perspective, a much more interesting area of inquiry is the "information building" role of modern campaigns, and the effects of information on voters (if not on election outcomes *per se*). Chapter 3 investigates the degree of structure and consistency voters evidence on election day, and the manner in which this structure and consistency varies with the amount of campaign activity to which voters have been exposed. The chapter presents evidence, gathered from actual ballots cast in Los Angeles County, that campaigns can and do help voters organize candidate choices and connect those choices with other political and ideological preferences. In the presence of a contested, two-sided campaign, voters grow more informed about the candidates or ballot measures in question, and make choices which are more consistent with other preferences. When campaign activity is lacking, voters behave more randomly.

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[6] Minor party candidates who have no hope of winning statewide races are a possible exception.

While Chapter 3 establishes an “election day” ordering of preferences which corresponds with degree of campaign activity exposure, the remaining four chapters explore the manner in which campaigns shape and order voter preferences *over time.*

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the degree to which subpresidential campaigns produce different effects than presidential contests do. As noted earlier, much of the previous voting behavior literature has examined presidential campaigns, and a great deal is known about the effects (or lack thereof) that presidential campaign activity produces in voting behavior. Chapter 4 confirms that in presidential election contests, party identification dominates vote choice throughout the election cycle, leaving little room for voters to make evaluations of candidates that are tied to the vote independently of partisanship. Chapter 5 finds that voters in subpresidential races, by contrast, tend to be more open to “learning” about the individual candidates than in presidential contests. Voters form more independent impressions of subpresidential candidates, and connect impressions with vote decisions in a manner which is less closely tied to one’s partisan predispositions, than in presidential races. I conclude that at the subpresidential level, campaigns do more than merely activate party voting. Campaigns serve the important function of building impressions of candidates that, while based to some degree on partisanship, impact the vote in a manner which is independent of partisanship. This independent influence of candidate impressions tends to grow larger, and even eclipse the influence of partisanship itself, as campaigns progress.

Voting behavior is not based merely on personal impressions of the various candidates, however. The issues about which a voter is concerned can be a powerful guide to his choices on election day — but only if a particular candidate has given those issues enough attention on the campaign trail to demonstrate that they will truly be high priorities when he is elected to office. Chapter 6 identifies the major issues discussed in six different statewide campaigns, and then tracks the vote over time among the constituents of each issue. By tracking a number of constituencies over time in a variety of campaign contexts and issue environments, the dissertation is able to provide a clearer understanding the circumstances under which campaign discourse can make issue priorities more salient on election day.

Chapter 7 examines the way targeted demographic and social groups respond to campaign communications. Even if the overall division of the vote remains steady between April and November, very important changes in the *structure* and *ordering* of the vote may have occurred over those intervening months. For example, a given candidate's coalition may have initially been disproportionately composed of suburbanites and younger white women; after the campaign process has created a more fully informed electorate, his coalition may have become more rural and more male. This chapter will examine in depth the ability of subpresidential campaigns to assemble coalitions, with a particular focus on how voters *assemble themselves* in coalitions differently as a result of exposure to campaign messages.

From a normative perspective, an electorate which collectively connects informed perceptions about candidates with votes for those candidates to a *strong* degree seems inherently different from an electorate which chooses candidates with substantially less regard for impressions of those same candidates or the issue priorities those candidates profess. The latter is essentially a collection of individual voters, each making largely idiosyncratic decisions about whom to support. The former has become collectively responsible in making coherent and rational connections between various preferences. Furthermore, the degree of responsibility in the electorate has important consequences for regime legitimacy. An official who takes office after the electorate has carefully weighed his merits against those of his opponent should enjoy a greater level of credibility than an official who, though winning by the same margin, was elected on the basis of partisan or idiosyncratic considerations (without reference to the merits of the competing candidates themselves).

This dissertation will examine the manner and degree to which subpresidential campaign activity helps assemble, shape, and bring about that more responsible electorate.

CHAPTER 2

STRATEGIC INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

This chapter establishes the manner in which campaign organizations themselves design and utilize strategic information, with an eye to ordering and structuring voter preferences. In a criminal investigation, this chapter would establish the “motive and opportunity” of candidates to influence voters’ organization and ordering of preferences. Before going on in later chapters to evaluate the *actual* effect of campaigns on voting behavior, it is first important to examine the manner in which campaigns *attempt* to influence voting behavior. The chapter does this by giving a general overview of how statewide campaigns gather and employ strategic information, in an effort to better-structure voter preferences.

The assumption is that campaigns are rational strategic actors who seek to gain the maximum impact from limited resources. Specifically, a campaign seeks to connect the greatest number of voters with that campaign’s own candidate. Strategic information is an important tool campaigns use to maximize voter connection with the minimal expenditure of resources. This chapter will discuss in detail the manner in which components of strategic information research work together to identify voter preferences and connect those preferences with candidate choices.

Campaign organizations, being rational strategic actors, have a single goal: winning on election day. Campaign operatives and consultants are in this business to win elections, not to produce a more responsible electorate *per se.* I will argue, however, that it is precisely by rigorously pursuing their own self-interested ends (winning) that campaigns simultaneously educate voters and lead voters to order their own preferences more rationally. This chapter, through close examination of a campaign's self-interested pursuit of victory, explains why the nature of that pursuit produces the collateral effect of a more responsible electorate.

The chapter is organized in three sections. The first gives an overview of the vote-influencing variables that campaigns can manipulate, especially candidate impressions and issue importance. This section draws upon the scholarly literature which has observed the behavior of campaigns and consultants. The second section describes the techniques that campaigns use to acquire actionable information, such as opposition research, surveys, focus groups, ad tests, and so forth. Finally, the third section describes the kinds of analyses that consultants use to elicit actionable information from the data whose collection was described in section two.

I. What Campaigns Influence

A candidate's campaign seeks, above all, to shape voter perceptions of the competing candidates in a manner most advantageous to its own side. Generally speaking, this means making the case that the candidate in question is a better person for the job in question than is the competitor. In making this case, the campaign may emphasize and contrast any number of candidate characteristics: party affiliation, personal qualities, issue positions, values, professional experience, issue agendas, job performance, issue handling ability, and so forth. As Campbell and his colleagues (1960: 42) put it, "If we are to understand what leads the voter to his decision at the polls we must know how he sees the things to which this decision relates. In casting a vote the individual acts toward a world of politics in which he perceives the personalities, issues, and the parties and other groupings of a presidential contest." Influencing the manner in which the voter eventually comes to perceive these "personalities, issues and parties" is the role of the respective campaigns.

Partisanship

Nearly every election contest examined in this dissertation is partisan. A given candidate is the nominee of his party; he carries the party's label, and voters carry certain perceptions of the two parties. The Republican and Democratic parties are among the most enduring of political objects, and the Republican and Democratic labels bring with them substantial baggage (both positive and negative) for the candidates to whom those labels are attached. As Campbell et al (1960: 54) have shown, however, the nature and substance of individual campaigns can have a great impact on the degree to which voters' perceptions of candidates are tied to the candidates' respective party affiliations. The Presidential elections of 1952 and 1956 featured the same two candidates, but in 1952 voters where much more likely to evaluate Eisenhower and Stevenson in terms of party affiliation than in 1956. In 1956, the voters were much more likely to evaluate the candidates (particularly Stevenson) in personal terms than they were in 1952. Campaigns, in their communications with voters, have a choice of themes to emphasize. It stands to reason that depending on the particular electoral environment, campaigns may choose to emphasize different themes than they would in a different environment.

Outright appeals to naked partisanship ("Make it emphatic — vote straight Democratic") are more common in districts or states with a clear majority favoring one party or the other. But both candidates will seek to rally their own core partisans, regardless of the size of that constituency. At minimum, this means giving core partisans a reason to show up at the polls on election day. In building a winning coalition, it is critical to secure the base vote before seeking to expand the coalition. This often means reassuring co-partisans that the nominee is a true representative of the party and its values.

Issues[7]

Party priming is often relatively subtle, and carried out through the problem, issue, and policy statements which candidates formulate. Democratic candidates emphasize the need to increase educational spending, regulate guns, clean up the environment, and provide child care for “working families.” Republicans talk about fighting crime, cutting taxes, and reducing government regulation of the economy. Each candidate talks about issues his respective party “owns.” An “owned” issue is one on which the party’s candidate can reasonably claim to have greater concern, innovation, and initiative (the party coalition basis of this difference is developed in Petrocik, 1996).

The emphasis on owned-issues can rally partisans because it appeals to differences between Democrats and Republicans in the problem concerns and policy preferences that tend to be specific to the parties. It also has a secondary party effect, the creation of an issue environment favoring one side or the other. This secondary party effect is created when one candidate successfully persuades the electorate — or capitalizes on an already-held belief — that one or more of the issues “owned” by his party are more important than the issues emphasized by the opposition. When one candidate successfully makes the problems he and his party own the issue meaning of the election, this can be an important determiner of the election outcome. At that point, the successful candidate has created an issue environment which will activate partisanship among his own party's base, give independents an important reason to side with him, and even provoke some defection among voters from the other party (especially among those for whom the issue in question is an important concern).

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[7] The substance of this subsection draws heavily from the theoretical section of Blunt, Petrocik and Steeper (1998), but has been rewritten and edited by the author for the present work.

A candidate's campaign, therefore, can be thought of in part as a "marketing" effort to achieve a strategic advantage. The advantage accrues by making problems which reflect owned-issues *the substantive meaning of the election* and the criteria by which voters make their choice. Many, probably most, such issues – for example, taxes on the Republican side, or environmental protection on the Democratic side – are so clearly linked to one of the parties in the historical record that candidate only has to raise the salience of the issue to benefit from it. However, the party advantage associated with some issues is much smaller. For some issues, the parties' records for handling the issue may be indistinguishable in the public's mind. In this second case, a candidate can *enhance* an issue advantage that exceeds the party-conferred advantage on an issue; he may even be able to create an issue advantage that is normally absent.

There are several ways in which the candidate-specific component of the issue advantage might be enlarged. The most obvious is through proposals by the candidate. An energetic and repeated emphasis on an issue, coupled with a specific set of proposals, may enable a candidate to create an issue advantage much larger than the one that typically exists in voters' perceptions of the parties' handling of the issue. But whether the issue advantage exists purely because it is party-owned or more because of the issue proposals of the candidate, the candidate's task is to present himself as the person who is best able to address the issues and problems of greatest concern to the electorate.

Many voters respond to this strategy because they are uncertain about what represents a serious problem, they lack clear preferences about the best solutions to social or economic problems and issues, and are inclined to view elections as being about resolving problems rather than about the specifics of the resolution. The key fact is not what policies candidates promise to pursue, but what problems (education needs, high taxes) will be resolved. Ideological voters may have clear ideas about what policies best address a particular problem. But most voters are pragmatic and instrumental, mostly interested in "fixing" problems, and they see differences in the parties' abilities to fix current problems.

Personal Qualities

Although the issue content of campaign discourse is very important, voters do not elect bundles of issue positions or issue emphases to public office. As noted earlier, the personal qualities of the two candidates is an important component of the voter's decision calculus. "Personal qualities" here means the characteristics of the candidates not directly tied to issue positions or party affiliation. Some examples include the competing candidates' integrity, honesty, friendliness, energy or dynamism, creativity, fidelity to duty, previous professional or political experience, ability to handle the demands of the job being sought, manner of speech and bearing, manner of conducting personal and family life, ability to solve problems, and so forth.

Obviously, campaigns will seek to emphasize the qualities most advantageous to its own side and those which detract most from the opponent's standing. But the manner in which this is done is often quite subtle; voters can be skeptical about communications touting the superior character of one side ("they're just blowing their own horn"), and outright assaults on an opponent's character or personal choices can even produce a backlash of sympathy for the attacked candidate if the attack is perceived to be unfair or unrelated to the office sought.

A candidate's best option is often to use third parties, especially newspapers and widely-respected officials, to supply testimonials about the candidates' personal qualities. Such sources, especially newspapers, can be presented as neutral outside observers of the facts in a race. ("He's been called the most effective attorney general in state history." Or, "The [newspaper name] says [candidate name] exercised extremely poor judgement in the [name of incident] affair.")

However it is accomplished, the goal is to present one candidate as more understanding of people's problems, more in touch with the voters' own values, and better-prepared to hold the office in question. Over time, the voter develops a sense of "fit" between a candidate, the office, and himself that translates into an affirmative vote on election day.

Job Performance

The previous chapter discussed the theory of retrospective voting in great detail. Voters do use their perceptions of the incumbent's job performance as an important factor in candidate selection. But for such perceptions to be accessible to voters as a consideration in the vote calculus, the campaigns need to remind the electorate about the highlights and lowlights of how each competitor has performed in his respective job. When an incumbent is seeking reelection, he will naturally emphasize his accomplishments in office; the challenger will emphasize the incumbent's shortcomings. In an open-seat contest, debate may center on either the incumbent *party's* performance or on the past performance of the two competing candidates in their respective previous jobs.

Iyengar and Petrocik (2000) found considerable evidence, both quantitative and experimental, that campaigns can serve the function of making these retrospective considerations more salient for voters. In 1992 and 1996, the proportion of voters making a candidate choice consistent with either party identification or retrospective evaluations of the incumbent's job performance grew significantly as the campaign unfolded. That this was due to exposure to campaign messages on the subject was confirmed by experimental studies.

This section of the chapter has described some of the key variables and attitudes that campaigns seek to influence. Each subsection has examined particular variables and mentioned some general ways in which respective candidates may try to influence public perceptions of those variables. However, this examination has left a critical question unanswered: how does a campaign decide which variables can be most easily influenced? How can a campaign best husband available resources to yield the largest potential payoff in the vote? The ensuing two sections of the chapter will describe the manner in which campaigns acquire and effectively employ strategic information to achieve these aims.

II. Acquiring Actionable Information

This section of the chapter will provide a general overview of the different components of strategic information in a political campaign. Not all campaigns will utilize all components, but the better-funded the campaign the more components it will typically employ. Throughout the chapter, I will provide examples from actual campaigns which employed the components discussed, and the manner in which that strategic information shaped the course of the campaign.

It should be noted that the substance of the remainder of the chapter, and the attendant examples, are drawn from my own professional experience. For many years, I have worked closely with Mr. Fred Steeper, a widely respected Republican pollster and consultant. In that capacity, I have managed and analyzed comprehensive research programs for dozens of candidates for state and local office. Mr. Steeper himself was responsible for each campaign's overall research design and ultimate strategic recommendations.

The substance of this chapter is drawn from my own observations of how campaign organizations utilize strategic research, and from extensive discussions with Mr. Steeper about the same. Caution is always needed in generalizing from one's own personal experience. I am convinced, however, that this experience is not atypical. Most importantly, numerous recent studies and discussions of the role of consultants in political campaigns (see, for example, Shea and Burton, 2001; Johnson, 2001; Shaw, 2000) have made observations identical to my own. Furthermore, Market Strategies is a widely-respected Republican firm, in the heart of the mainstream of political research.

Many of the specific applications of strategic information research described in this chapter have been developed by Fred Steeper. Other consultants use similar techniques, or variations on the techniques described here, and some may have developed techniques even more sophisticated than these. Many campaigns, however, usually for budget reasons[8], do not use the full range of techniques described in this chapter.

One campaign which will be referred to frequently, because it employed nearly every technique described, is that of Illinois Governor Jim Edgar's 1994 re-election bid. Edgar was a moderate, downstate Republican first elected by a narrow margin in 1990. His first term had been marked by neither spectacular achievements nor ignominious scandals; it might best be characterized as quiet but solid management of state government (Gove, 1992). Edgar was challenged by Chicago Democrat Dawn Clark Netsch, the incumbent state Comptroller. Prior to winning the Comptroller's race in 1990, Netsch had served in the state legislature since 1973. She won a bruising three-way primary in March by a 45 percent to 36 percent to 15 percent margin, after placing third in public opinion polls as recently as January (Hardy, 1994a). Netsch was widely credited as having won the primary on the strength three television spots, which showed her (a slightly-built, gray-haired woman well into her sixties) sinking trick pool shots. The tag line was "Dawn Clark Netsch: A Straight Shooter for Illinois," and she blanketed the airwaves with these spots in January and February. (Kirby, 1994).

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[8] There are other reasons a given technique may not be used. A given campaign's consultant may not aware of a given technique, may not have the capacity to execute it, or may not believe it would be appropriate for the campaign in question.

Polls conducted in the wake of the primary showed voters knew little about the substance of Dawn Clark Netsch's issue positions or proposals — but Edgar enjoyed only a six-point lead (49 percent to 43 percent). Given the margin of error, the race was a statistical dead heat. Of even more concern, Edgar's share of the vote was under 50 percent. The remainder of the chapter will discuss the manner in which a campaign in general — with examples from Edgar's campaign in particular — could use strategic information research to identify the best way to lead voters to order their preferences in a manner which is both more coherent and more advantageous to its own side.

Background Research

Early in the election cycle, when the identity of one's opponent is clear, it is common to conduct background research on both the opponent's record and the candidate's own record. Background researchers (sometimes referred to as "opposition researchers") examine voting records, newspaper stories, and old campaign materials in great detail. The object is to cull from this material a complete picture of each candidate's history of issue positions and public statements. Of special interest are inflammatory or "extreme" sounding statements such as "[Candidate Name] is firm! No gun control of any kind!" or "My number one priority is to ban every abortion — even for rape and incest."

If the candidate has held any kind of state or federal legislative office, a background researcher will compile and examine every vote the candidate cast. These will then be grouped by subject area, with special attention given to ideologically extreme votes, votes against politically popular legislation, and those where the legislator was the only person (or one of only a handful of people) to vote in a particular manner. A legislator who establishes a pattern of casting such votes may have firm principles, and those principles may be very much in tune with the voters of his or her particular district, but those principles are quite often out of step with the preferences and priorities of the rest of the state. A congressman representing a rural district heavily dependent on coal mining might have a good reason to vote against the Clean Air Act, for example, but such a position may be anathema to the urban residents of the state. When a candidate is able to present rigorously documented information about an opponent's own voting record, it is possible to make the case that however right a person may be for his or her own district, he or she is not the best representative of the interests of the rest of the state's voters.

In Dawn Clark Netsch's case, she was frequently the only state legislator to vote against bills increasing or imposing mandatory minimum sentences for particular crimes; she also voted against the death penalty at nearly every opportunity.[9] As she explained on numerous occasions, these votes were the product of deep convictions and firm principles; she opposed the death penalty, and she thought judges should be granted the maximum discretion in imposing sentences. Such positions were not necessarily unpopular with the urban, upscale, lakefront liberals who comprised a large portion of her senatorial district and had reelected her by comfortable margins. It seemed unlikely that such positions would resonate favorably with the rest of the state's voters, however, so Edgar's background researcher drew attention to them in his final report.

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[9] Just a few examples of legislation on which she was alone or nearly-alone in her dissent: a bill imposing mandatory sentences for putting poison or razor blades in Halloween candy, a bill imposing the death penalty for torture and murder of a child, a bill imposing the death penalty for murdering a paramedic or police officer performing his official duties, and a bill that would automatically disallow bail to someone arrested for a felony while *already out on bail* for another felony.

Voting records are not the only source a background researcher examines. Attendance records at committee meetings and legislative sessions are also scrutinized; frequent absences may indicate lack of commitment. Travel logs are also carefully checked, and not just for evidence of excessive junketeering. Governors and other officials often have state planes at their disposal, and are required to reimburse the state when these planes are used for personal travel. Sometimes they neglect to do so.

Other public records may yield evidence of arrests, lawsuits, unpaid taxes, and even failure to vote in past elections. When a candidate has released his or her income tax returns, these can be scrutinized for questionable financial dealings. In some cases, for example, a candidate may have used substantial amounts of campaign funds for personal use. If reported on a tax return as taxable income, such a practice may be legal — but it may raise questions in the minds of voters (or potential contributors) about the candidate's priorities and motivations in seeking office.

When the opponent is a prosecutor, background researchers usually investigate any wrongful convictions which may have been later overturned — and plea bargains which resulted in the release of criminals who went on to commit additional crimes.

Any available television or radio interview programs on which the candidate has appeared will be examined for expressed opinions which may be far from the political mainstream (even if a legislative voting record *per se* of that position may not exist). The footage need not be policy-related; it may be chosen because the background researcher thinks it reflects something important about a candidate's character and fitness for office. In a recent Senate contest, for example, the researcher uncovered "Hard Copy" video footage of one candidate engaging in what appeared to be a drunken pushing contest with reporters.

As noted above, background research is typically conducted both on an opponent[10] and on the sponsoring candidate himself. The primary reason for conducting background research on oneself is to know and uncover everything the opponent will know and uncover — and thus be prepared for the kinds of attacks he is most likely to face. Most candidates would find it difficult to recall all the details of a voting record which might span several decades. Others find it difficult to disclose potentially embarrassing information to the rest of the campaign team, and therefore do not share all that the team needs to know about potential vulnerabilities.

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[10] If the primary is held relatively late in the year, and there is more than one viable candidate on the other side, research may be conducted on all of the viable contenders. The sponsoring candidate would then be prepared to face any of the potential winners from the other party, without delaying the research process.

Regardless of the motivation, commissioning background research on one's own candidate gives the sponsoring campaign time to formulate explanations for potentially embarrassing votes or plea bargains, reestablish the context for quotes or public incidents which may appear insensitive or extreme on their face, and — above all — assemble a body of countervailing positives for each potential negative.

If campaigns are to educate voters about the assets and liabilities of competing candidates, the campaign organizations themselves must begin with a clear understanding of each candidate's assets and liabilities. Background research on one's self and one's opponent provides this understanding. Armed with this knowledge, a benchmark poll can be formulated to guide the campaign in choosing areas to emphasize and prepare to defend from attack.

The Benchmark Poll

A campaign would conduct a benchmark poll soon after the identities of both candidates are firmly established, to measure the status of the contest and plan a general, overall campaign strategy. A benchmark poll is usually quite lengthy, with each interview lasting at least 20 to 25 minutes. A typical organization for the questionnaire is to begin with a warm-up question about the general direction of the state or country, ask awareness and favorability of political figures and other people in the news, followed by trial heat match-ups for various offices which will be on the ballot that November. If the primary election has not yet determined the challenger's identity, more than one hypothetical trial heat may be asked for any given race.

After the trial heats, it is common to measure job performance for candidates currently holding some other office. If the race includes, say, an incumbent Governor challenging an incumbent Senator, voters would be asked if they approve or disapprove of the way each principal has been handling his job. Voters would also be asked what issue or issues they believe to be most important in the upcoming race. Sometimes this is asked as an open-ended question; other times, voters are asked to make first and second choices from a fixed list of six issues.

A large portion of the questionnaire would then test reactions to policy proposals both sides have made — and reactions to attack themes which could be used against each candidate. These are typically presented as batteries of questions, with individual questions asked in a random order. For example, "Here are some things you might learn about [CANDIDATE NAME]'s voting record in the state senate. For each one, please tell me if it makes you much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, or much less likely to vote for him for Governor, or if it makes no difference to your vote." The results of the background research previously conducted on each side constitutes the bulk of the content of these questions. It is here that each side's potentially strongest positives and most troublesome vulnerabilities would be tested. The goal is to present a "campaign in miniature" to the voters surveyed, simulating for them the range of messages they might hear from each side over the ensuing months.

The main part of the survey typically finishes with a second reading of the trial heat, prefaced with a statement such as "Now that we have discussed the race for [OFFICE] in more detail, I am going to ask again a question I asked earlier." Those giving a different answer at the end than at the beginning might be asked, open-ended, the reasons why they changed sides or are no longer undecided. The survey closes with an extensive series of demographic questions.[11]

Qualitative Research

The quantitative research discussed above is critical, because it uses representative samples of the electorate in question. It is a powerful tool for uncovering *which* messages resonate with voters and *what* information drives vote change. It is less effective, however, in determining *how* to communicate those messages with voters in the most meaningful language and understandable terms. The focus group fills this need; focus groups are extremely useful for further developing the messages which campaigns will use on the stump and in paid advertising. Qualitative research can reveal the most effective *language and tone* for connecting voters with the candidate who best represents their interests or concerns.

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[11] Demographics are always asked at the end of a survey. This is because many demographic measures, such as age, marital status, income, and education are so sensitive. Response rates to these questions are greater if the interviewer has previously established a rapport with the respondent.

Focus groups are often held soon after the benchmark poll has been analyzed and digested, and the most important messages and themes have been determined. The question is no longer so much “which messages are important;” the representative sample of the entire electorate answered that. The question is now “how can those important messages best be communicated.”

Most political research firms manage and conduct both quantitative and qualitative research. In most instances, the same researchers who designed, conducted and analyzed the poll will now turn their attention to designing, conducting, and analyzing the focus groups. The campaign’s principal research firm subcontracts the recruitment and hosting to a focus group facility in the city of interest which specializes in that end of the business.

Focus group facilities maintain extensive databases, often as large as tens of thousands of names, of local people who are interested in participating in a qualitative research session[12]. The campaign's principal research firm would contact the facility, confirm room availability and the facility's ability to recruit sessions in the necessary time frame, and supply the facility with detailed instructions for participant recruitment. Political sessions are typically conducted with swing voters: those who are not locked in to a particular candidate and are not fiercely partisan in their general orientation. Such voters are theoretically the most "open" to weighing messages from both sides, and are the ones over which the election will largely be fought. Because these "persuadable voters" are the target of most campaign communications, they are the ones the campaign will use to test the execution of campaign messages.

The facility is usually instructed to begin by selecting a good cross section of the "middle" of the population; experience has shown it is awkward to attempt discussion of politics when the group includes both the very wealthy and the very poor, or participants with post-graduate degrees and those who failed to finish high school. It is typical to include minimum and maximum education standards, and minimum and maximum income levels. Often, minimum and maximum ages will also be set in advance: the youngest participant is typically 25, and a cap is usually set on the number of senior citizens.

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[12] Participants are compensated for their time. The amount varies by market, but typically ranges from $40 to $75.

The recruitment script will confirm that participants meet the basic criteria outlined in the paragraph above, and will also filter out certain other types of people. For security reasons, anyone who is a reporter or who has a reporter in the family will be excluded, as are those with a family member active in political campaigns.[13]

Swing voters are those in the middle of the political spectrum. Strong partisans will be filtered out, as will extreme ideologues. The trial heat is usually asked as part of the recruitment script, along with a measure of firmness of attachment to the candidate. The goal is to recruit an even mix of soft supporters of the Republican and Democratic candidates, while excluding all those who say they are “definitely” voting for one or the other.

Depending on the distribution of population in the state, it is typical to conduct two sessions in each of the state’s major regions[14]. Each session follows a fixed discussion guide, which serves as an outline for the moderator to follow. The moderator’s role is to act as a leader for the group, keep the session moving, and ensure that all the relevant areas of discussion are covered. The moderator's questions should be posed and phrased with a view to drawing out reactions from participants. Although he or she might present "arguments you might hear from Candidate X or Candidate Y," the moderator should not serve as a cheerleader or advocate for one candidate or the other.

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[13] Assuming that they have not already been screened out by the education filter, attorneys, college professors, and those who teach government or social science at the secondary school level are typically excluded as well. As focus group participants, they tend to lecture other respondents and refer to “inside” knowledge. As a result, they tend to dominate the session and put a damper on discussion.

[14] For example: Northern and Southern California, Chicago area and downstate Illinois, St. Louis and Kansas City Missouri, Las Vegas and Reno Nevada, and so forth.

The discussion usually begins with warm-up questions about the big issues facing the state, then transitions in to a closer look at each of the major candidates in the race. The moderator may spend ten minutes or so on each candidate, asking participants what they know about him or her, what the candidate's major strengths or shortcomings appear to be, and why or why not the candidate appears suited for the office being sought.

The content of the remainder of the 90 to 110 minute session is determined by the race in question. The moderator may distribute a list of one candidate's issue positions or past votes and ask participants to take a few minutes to read it over. The list might be identical to the one tested in the statewide survey. This would be followed by ten to fifteen minutes of discussion of which items participants thought were especially important. The moderator would pay particular attention to the tone of voice, emphasis, and language that participants use in reacting to particular items. A focus group discussion allows a give and take between participants and moderator that is impossible to simulate in a poll; the moderator is able to take careful note of the way participants suggest additional facts and explanations to each other and react to the statements others make. The moderator might test various responses a candidate might make to information which appears damning on its face (“Yes, he vetoed or voted against that bill that contains that great-sounding component. But what if you learned the bill also contained provisions to do X, Y and Z — and that’s why he felt it shouldn’t become law?”) If discussion doesn’t naturally gravitate toward the information items known to have earned strong reactions in the poll, the moderator would ensure that a solid portion of the allotted time was spent exploring these topics. This whole exercise would then be repeated for the other candidate.

Ad Testing

The survey results and focus group findings are put together and used to develop advertisements which execute those messages identified by the research as most important. Before finalizing the ads and putting them on the air, however, it is common to convene new focus groups to test these spots. The same kinds of swing voters previously recruited for the focus groups would be recruited for these new sessions.

The format of an ad test group is quite different from a traditional focus group. The session is usually larger, including 24 to 30 participants rather than 10 to 12, and participants are usually seated in a classroom style rather than around a table. The focus is much more on the advertisements than on discussion. The moderator's script is fixed to a much greater degree, and participants respond to questions using an instant-response dial technology. The dials allow participants to give a private, instantaneous response to the moderator's questions and to the substance of the advertising or other material they are viewing; this response is not influenced by the responses of others, and participants do not have to worry about how others may react to their own responses. The moderator's computer receives and compiles wireless signals from all dials in the room; these responses can be observed in aggregate in real time, and then analyzed in depth after the session.

Ad test sessions are very much a hybrid of survey and focus group. After a brief introduction and demographic questions, the moderator will test favorability of various people in the news (including the candidates of interest); this is usually done on a 0-100 scale, with zero meaning very unfavorable and one hundred meaning very favorable. The intensity of the trial heat would also be measured on a 0-100 scale, with zero meaning definitely supporting one candidate, one hundred meaning definitely supporting the other candidate, and fifty meaning purely undecided. Perceived ability of the two candidates to handle various issues, and the perceived fit of various descriptive terms, can be measured in the same way.

The bulk of the session then involves watching ads and reacting to them. If the other side has been on the air, the moderator will have test reels for both candidates. At minimum, it is usually possible to obtain the opponent's advertisements from the primary; the idea is to have something to show from both sides. As each ad begins, respondents set their dials at fifty, the neutral point. As they see things that make them more likely to support the candidate who is the subject of the ad, they are instructed to turn their dials more toward one hundred. How much they turn is left entirely up to each respondent. As they see things that make them less likely to support the subject of the ad, they turn the dials more toward zero. The computer scans the room and records the reading on each dial every second; thus, changes each participant makes are recorded almost instantaneously. The end result is an average session-wide score for each second of the spot.

After watching each spot, participants use the dials to give a number of evaluative ratings of it. Using 0-100 scales, they will rate the spot's importance, believability, accuracy, degree of favorability generated toward the candidate featured, and how they now rate the intensity of their overall vote intention. The moderator is able to see the aggregated average response to each question, and can also break responses out by initial candidate support (or other subgroups, such as gender) if desired. Having such numbers immediately available is of great assistance in leading discussion, because the moderator already has a sense of how respondents are thinking. He can then focus on drawing out the reasons behind the numbers he has just seen.

Additional Polling

Strategic information analysis is an ongoing process, and campaigns will continue to poll throughout an election season to track the effectiveness of their communication strategies. Based on the results of these surveys, adjustments are often made.

III. Transforming Data into Actionable Information

This section will describe some of the techniques an analyst might use to draw strategic recommendations from the mass of data previously collected. Although the specific techniques vary somewhat depending on the type of research, the overall goal is the same: providing the campaign with guidance as to how public opinion can be most efficiently transformed or harnessed to the candidate's own advantage. This task often involves identifying misconceptions and confusions the public has about the two candidates and their respective records. As a result, the campaign's pursuit of its own self-interested ends (winning the election) often involves educating the public and leading voters to be more consistent in the choices they make.

The Benchmark Poll

Considerable time will be spent analyzing the benchmark poll, as it will provide a blueprint for much of the rest of the campaign. As discussed in the previous chapter, the normal vote will be computed for each major demographic group and then compared to that group's current committed vote[15]. A deviation from normal voting can then be calculated for each group; analysis groups typically include region, media market, age, gender, age within gender, social status (income, education, race), and other groups relevant to that particular locale (Mormons, urban Catholics, those employed by a casino, union members, and so forth). A candidate should be overperforming[16] significantly with groups which have traditionally been his core supporters or groups with which he is especially closely identified. Such groups could include a particular geographic region (for example, a congressman running for statewide office should significantly overperform with members of his own district), a racial or ethnic group (a Democratic Latino candidate should do significantly better with Latinos than a normal Democrat), or some other traditionally enthusiastic group. Groups with which the candidate currently underperforms[17] will be noted for especially intensive review. Suppose, for example, that the candidate is significantly underperforming with young women. The rest of the poll will be scoured to determine the reason for this underperformance. Are they simply unaware of the candidate? If aware, do they dislike him personally? Do they disapprove of his job performance? If so, why? Do they believe the candidate's issue agenda or positions differ from their own, when in fact they do not[18]? The campaign's reasoning is that these "underperforming" groups need some kind of information to eliminate that underperformance and bring them into the coalition with at least the enthusiasm their partisanship would predict.

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[15] The committed vote is a given candidate's share of the two-party vote, with undecided voters and supporters of minor parties excluded from the calculation.

[16] "Overperforming" means that the candidate's share of the two-party vote is significantly greater than the normal vote.

Voters will also be assigned to *issue constituencies*; those saying a particular issue is a top concern will be considered constituents of that particular issue. The normal vote can be computed for each issue constituency, and compared to the constituency's current committed vote. This will give the campaign a clearer idea of the issue constituencies with which it is underperforming, and the constituencies among which it enjoys an early advantage. The campaign may pay particular attention to developing messages for issues with which it lags. If, for example, voters concerned about health care are supporting the Democratic candidate at a rate significantly less than normal, that campaign might interpret this finding as a “wake up call” to articulate its health care proposals more clearly (and perhaps with more emphasis).

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[17] "Underperforming" means the candidate's share of the two-party vote is significantly less than the normal vote.

[18] An example would be a pro-choice Republican who some voters do not support early in the cycle because they assume he is pro-life.

There are a number of different ways to assess the power of the various pieces of potential attack information tested. The most obvious is to rank-order the items about the opponent from largest to smallest percent responding “much less likely” to each one. This gives a general sense of the relative revulsion with which voters react to each piece of information, and many campaigns are inclined to rely on little more than this rank-order (and cross-tabs of certain attack items with certain strategic subgroups) to determine the best communication strategy.

The simple rank-order does not, however, show any *prima facie* relationship with actual switching of votes, and a quality consultant will make a more thorough analysis of the data. There are often pieces of information toward which a great many voters will react negatively, but do not move many votes. It could be that the information in question is already widely known (and therefore already included in the vote calculus). In other instances, the information may be negative, and therefore earn a negative reaction, but simply not be salient enough to change a vote. A voter may disagree with the candidate’s voting record on gun control, and therefore say that the information makes him less likely to support the candidate, but gun control may not be an important enough issue for this person to move him all the way over to the opponent. Simply rank-ordering the items, therefore, is not sufficient for determining what moves voters to switch sides or make up their minds.

The open-ended question, “what are some of the reasons why you changed your vote,” is valuable because the voters themselves say, in their own words, what was most important in moving them from one candidate to the other. If it is preceded by a long battery of informational items, however, responses to the open ended question can suffer from a recency bias. Those items tested most recently are the freshest in the person’s mind, and might therefore be easier to recall when asked which items were especially important. An item asked earlier may have been just as important, but was more difficult to recall. To reduce the overall effect of this bias, items within the battery are randomized, and the order in which the batteries themselves are presented are often rotated[19]. Although question randomization and battery rotation make the aggregate data more reliable, the recency bias may still persist in each individual’s open-ended responses.

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[19] Rotating the batteries means that a randomly-selected half of the respondents will hear the battery of Republican candidate items first; the other half will hear the Democratic battery first.

Moreover, many campaigns ask a larger question, which cannot be answered by the cross-tabs or marginal rank-ordering of attack items alone: Will raising a given issue will *really change people's votes?* Market Strategies has found one effective use of applied multiple regression analysis as an unobtrusive means of measuring attitude change. When used in conjunction with other techniques, such as the open-ended "why did you change" question, it can provide important confirmation of suspected reasons for trial heat movement. The information items about the candidates are coded as continuous scales, ranging from "best for opponent" to "best for our candidate," with neutral responses in the middle. These are treated as independent variables predicting the late trial heat, which is also coded as a continuous scale (opponent-undecided-our candidate).

However, each voter's *initial* inclination in the trial heat is likely to exert some influence over how he reacts to the information items themselves. Negative information about his preferred candidate, and positive information about the candidate not supported, may be discounted. Furthermore, voters may have already been aware of some of the attack information and factored it into their initial vote choice.

It is important, therefore, to control for voters' initial leanings in the trial heat. This can be accomplished by building a two-step multiple regression model predicting the late vote, entering the early vote on the first step and then using a stepwise method to select which of the information items should be entered on the second step. The relative size of the standardized regression coefficients of the selected information items can then be compared to determine the relative strength of each item in driving early-to-late vote change.

The analyst would prepare a simple table to streamline the presentation. Each row of the table would represent a single information item. Columns would be included for the overall net percent more likely (percent more likely to vote for the candidate based on that information minus percent less likely), the zero-order (Pearson's r) correlation between each item and the late vote, the partial correlation (controlling for early vote) between each item and the late vote, and the size of each item's standardized regression coefficient (beta) in the final regression model. Presumably, the way in which voters respond to the information items will be conditioned in part by their existing candidate preference. Computing a partial correlation between each item and the late vote, controlling for the early vote, determines the portion of the relationship which is independent of existing candidate preference. Because the early vote is taken into account, this essentially yields a relationship between each information item and *change* in vote preference.

The information items could be sorted by size of the standardized regression (beta) coefficients and/or partial correlations with the late vote.

This gives the analyst a concise picture of which information items have the strongest relationship with vote change. Such an analysis provides an important blueprint for a successful campaign. Positive items[20] with a strong relationship to vote change should be emphasized in campaign communications; negative items[21] with a strong relationship to vote change should have compelling defenses prepared.

The 1994 Illinois gubernatorial campaign provides an interesting example of the execution of this technique. The benchmark poll focused in large part on two general aspects of Dawn Clark Netsch's candidacy: her proposals for education funding reform, and her voting record on crime and capital punishment issues. Because Netsch's education proposals included a tax component,[22] the natural impulse in the state's Republican circles was to attack her for supporting a tax increase. At the same time, however, Netsch's voting record on crime appeared far outside the mainstream; some thought this would therefore be a more fruitful line of attack. It was hoped that the benchmark poll would provide some guidance in choosing the most efficient use of limited campaign dollars.

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[20] Meaning "positive" for the candidate in question: those items which make large numbers of voters, on balance, more likely to vote for him or less likely to support the opponent.

[21] Meaning "negative" for the candidate in question: those which either make large numbers less likely to vote for him or which make large numbers more likely to support the opponent.

[22] The proposal involved increasing income taxes (some) and decreasing property taxes (by less), yielding more money for education and spreading those dollars around to various districts more equitably.

The poll included a battery of information items about Netsch's education and tax proposal, asking voters the extent to which each aspect made them more likely or less likely to support her proposal. As the table below shows, reactions to the proposal were mixed; voters liked the additional education funding, and liked the property tax reduction, but balked at the additional income taxes. Although these items do not measure a direct impact on the

Table 2-1
REACTIONS TO NETSCH'S EDUCATION AND TAX PROPOSAL

Here are some other things about Netsch's tax proposal. For each one please tell me if it makes you more likely or less likely to support her proposal. (IF MORE/LESS) Would that be much (more/less) likely or just somewhat (more/less) likely? (**Rank-ordered by percent much less likely)**

	Much More	Smwt More	Smwt Less	Much Less	Not Imp	DK Ref	Collapsed More	Collapsed Less
QB55. She proposes to increase the state income tax by 42 percent.	7%	15	25	47	2	3	23%	72
QA55. She proposes to increase the state income tax from three percent -- to four and a quarter percent.	8%	19	30	38	4	1	27%	68
Q58. Her tax proposal raises income taxes by two and one-half billion dollars.	13%	23	24	31	5	4	36%	55
QA59. Her tax proposal would provide an additional 280 million dollars to Chicago city schools.	27%	22	17	27	4	3	49%	44
QB59. Her tax proposal would provide an additional 280 million dollars to Chicago city schools, 270 million dollars to suburban Chicago schools, and 450 million dollars to downstate schools.	29%	28	16	19	4	5	57%	35
Q56. Her proposed income tax increase would allow a nine percent reduction in property taxes.	25%	32	18	16	5	4	57%	34
Q57. Her proposed income tax increase would provide AN ADDITIONAL one billion dollars to Illinois public schools.	39%	23	16	15	4	3	62%	31

gubernatorial vote *per se*, Netsch had invested so much of her campaign in the education and tax proposal, and tried to identify herself so closely with this proposal, support for this critical proposal could be thought of as support for her candidacy.

Reactions to the crime information, by contrast, were anything but mixed:

Table 2-2

REACTIONS TO DAWN CLARK NETSCH'S CRIME VOTES

Here are some things you might learn about the way Dawn Clark Netsch voted on the crime issue when she was a state senator from 1973 to 1990. For each one please tell me if it makes you more likely or less likely to vote for her for governor. (Rank-ordered by percent much less likely)

	Much	**Smwt**	**Smwt**	**Much**	**Not**	**DK/**	**Collapsed**	
	More	**More**	**Less**	**Less**	**Imp**	**Ref**	**More**	**Less**
Q65. She voted against the death Penalty in nearly all murder cases including murder of police officers, paramedics, and minors; and voted against the death penalty in cases of murder by drug dealers or for those convicted of a second murder.	7%	6	22	58	5	2	13%	79
Q66. She voted against most proposals for longer jail sentences including voting against life sentences for third-time convicted felons.	6%	6	27	54	5	2	12%	81
Q68. She voted against stricter laws on the use of firearms in a crime including voting against a 10 year minimum sentence for an armed felony, and against a 20 year minimum sentence for a second armed felony.	9%	7	29	47	5	3	16%	77
Q69. She voted against stricter penalties for juvenile offenders including voting against making it a crime to join a street gang and against trying minors convicted of an armed felony as adults.	9%	12	27	46	4	2	21%	73
Q67. She voted AGAINST proposals to restrict parole, bail, and good time credit including voting AGAINST a proposal to deny parole for the most serious convicted felons.	17%	17	23	35	4	4	33%	59

After testing the crime battery, the survey closed by asking the trial heat a second time. Edgar's margin jumped from 49 percent-to-43 percent to 55 percent-to-35 percent. When asked, open-ended, why they changed sides, a large majority of voters cited Netsch's record on crime issues.

Given these results, the crime issue seemed the most logical area of emphasis; Netsch appeared to be far from the mainstream of state opinion on the issue, it was likely that few voters were aware of her outlying views[23], and once voters were informed of her views they tended to side with Edgar.

The correlation analysis and regression model served to reinforce this finding. Table 2-3 shows, for each item, the overall "net more likely," the zero-order correlation with the late trial heat, the partial correlation with the late trial heat (controlling for the early trial heat), and the beta coefficient in the regression model. Netsch's opposition to the death penalty looked like an exceptionally fruitful line of attack: it had one of the strongest beta coefficients in the model, and one of the largest overall "net less likely" percents. While some aspects of Netsch's tax proposal might make her vulnerable, all of the crime items had a strongly negative impact on her vote.

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[23] In a regression model predicting the *early* vote, tax plan items dominated the crime items. This indicates that Netsch's current trial heat standing was much more a product of public information about her tax plan than her voting record on crime. Indeed, there had been very little mention of her crime votes during the primary campaign, but much had been made recently of her education and tax plan.

Table 2-3
Impact of Netsch Information on Late Trial Heat

	Net More Likely	Zero-Order	Partial (Early Vote)	Beta
Q69 Opposed stricter juvenile measures	-52	.31	.29	.10
Q65 Against death penalty in all cases	-66	.41	.28	.10
Q58 Raises taxes by $2.5B	-19	.49	.28	.09
Q55 Increase the state income tax percent	-45	.45	.24	.07
Q67 Against parole restrictions	-26	.25	.21	.07
Q66 Opposed longer sentences	-69	.35	.28	n.s.
Q68 Against armed crime sentences	-61	.30	.23	n.s.
Q59 Additional dollars to various schools	+13	.40	.22	n.s.
Q56 Allows 9% property tax reduction	+23	.42	.20	n.s.
Q57 Provides $1B to schools	+31	.41	.13	n.s.

I have deliberately excluded from this analysis table the more detailed regression coefficients and statistics that it would be customary to report in a scholarly paper or journal article. The purpose of this table is to recreate the kind of presentation that a political researcher would use in analyzing a pre-election benchmark poll. The analysis aims at quickly and concisely presenting the nature of relationships between “learning exercise” information and the impact of that information on voting.

Qualitative Research

In the case of 1994 Illinois, focus group participants had a mixed reaction to Netsch’s education and tax plan, but few expressed much passion about it one way or the other. When discussion turned to her votes on crime and the death penalty, however, there was a marked change in the room. Many participants grew quite animated. Some expressed shock and disbelief that any elected official could have *really* cast the votes Netsch did. The groups concluded that if the votes could be fairly documented, Netsch was simply not a credible candidate for statewide office. The campaign concluded from this exercise that documentation should accompany any advertising concerning Netsch's voting record, but that the *most* extreme-sounding of her votes[24] should not be discussed (even with documentation). They were simply so far out of the mainstream, voters looked past the documentation and concluded that no rational legislator could have *really* cast such a vote.

The moderator might also test video footage of each candidate discussing his background or some issues relevant to the race. In addition to gauging feelings about how the candidate appears on camera, it is possible to probe participants for their perceptions of the candidate's sincerity, professionalism, and tone. What strengths does he have as a speaker? Does she need to slow down? Use less technical jargon? Does the person's regional accent annoy anyone?

Toward the end of the session, a period of time is usually reserved for discussion of "how do you feel now" about the candidates and the race, after having examined and discussed these issues in depth. Experience has shown that participants are sometimes reluctant to admit in front of a group that they "changed sides," so the question may be phrased as "Did you move a little closer toward one side or the other?" or, "How did your feelings about the candidates change over the course of the session tonight?" The tide against Netsch was so unanimous, and so focused on her crime votes, there was little doubt as to the course the Edgar campaign should take.

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[24] For example, opposing the death penalty in the case of torture and murder of a child.

The responses participants give contain a richness and texture that is impossible to capture in a telephone survey. Focus group participants notice things, consider things, and turn things over in their heads much like real voters do over the course of a political campaign; the focus group format allows them to do this to a much greater extent than is allowed a person being interviewed over the phone. Focus group participants can therefore give insights that cannot be captured in a survey, and these insights can be incorporated into the texture and tone of the ensuing campaign advertising.

For example, in one race a candidate for statewide office used the tag line "he's one of us." The candidate was trying to emphasize that his background and the focus of his public policy agenda was more in tune with the average person than were those of his opponent. Over the course of the focus group, participants learned more about the issue positions and voting records of both candidates. Toward the end of the session, one woman blurted out, "If this guy is really 'one of us,' I'm going to have to change who I am!" Other participants quickly added their agreement: based on what they had learned, they concluded the candidate was too far from the mainstream to really be "one of us." This led to the development of a simple — but successful — advertisement which started out "CANDIDATE NAME says he's 'one of us.' But …" The spot went on to highlight a number of votes and issue positions which were far from the mainstream of public opinion. The surveys had identified particular issue positions as outside the mainstream. The focus group discussion confirmed this, and suggested a powerful frame for delivering that message.

Ad Testing

After the session, these moment-to-moment scores can then be plotted on a graph, overlaid on the spot, and viewed in real time as the spot plays. Particularly effective portions of the spot can then be identified — as can portions which are either dead weight or which may have backfired. Separate lines can also be broken out for those initially supporting each candidate, and for those initially undecided. Of particular interest are the portions of spots which provoke a favorable response among *even those initially supporting the other side.*

With "negative" or "comparison" spots, it is especially important to break out separate lines for those initially supporting one side or the other. A *successful* attack spot moves the lines for all three groups (Republican, Democrat, and undecided) significantly into negative territory. An *adequate* attack spot moves undecided voters and those initially supporting the ad's sponsor (the attacker) into negative territory, but leaves the target's supporters around the neutral point. A *poorly executed* attack spot moves only the attacker's partisans into negative territory, but drives undecided voters and the target's supporters into positive territory (indicating the spot generated sympathy for the target or even a backlash against the attacker). The moderator is able to follow all of these lines on the computer screen, during the test, giving him a good general idea of how the participants are reacting to what is being shown. In tests of ads detailing Dawn Clark Netsch's crime votes, moment-to-moment reaction lines were sharply negative even among those initially supporting Netsch.

At various points during the session, it is common to take a break for discussion. Although discussion is more difficult in such a large session, participants are often eager to tell the group what they think of the ads they have just watched. Because the moderator is armed with the knowledge of how each spot was actually rated by the room as a whole, it is possible to probe advertisements or segments of ads which generated especially positive or negative reactions. The discussion can then be steered to these "spikes" in moment-to-moment ratings. Also, if an ad received poor credibility ratings (or example), participants can be asked what they found to be not believable about it. A further advantage of the dial data is that because the moderator knows what the room as a whole believes, a respondent giving an outlying response during discussion can be quickly identified, and the discussion shifted to what other participants may think (without giving the outlying respondent the opportunity to dominate discussion or intimidate others).

At the end of the session, the diagnostic questions asked at the beginning of the session will be asked again; any changes will be particularly noted in the analysis. If the ads focused on a particular issue or handful of issues, changes in the perceived ability to handle that issue will be carefully examined.

The session typically closes with the moderator asking participants to think about the trial heat intensity number they gave at the beginning and compare it to the number they gave at the end. Those moving in a more Democratic direction will then be asked to raise their hands, and the moderator will ask each the reasons they moved that way. The same will be done for those moving closer to the Republican. The intersection of the dial responses and these reported reactions are carefully scrutinized in evaluating the effectiveness of the advertising tested.

Additional Polling

It is common to conduct a baseline survey immediately preceding the first extensive media buy. The poll would include comprehensive measures of where the race stands prior to the major advertising: trial heat, favorable/unfavorable ratings, job approval, and perceived ability to handle particular issues. At the completion of the advertising, another poll would be fielded testing many of the same questions. If the first advertising wave included an attack or "comparison" component, changes in both candidate favorable/unfavorable ratings would be carefully scrutinized. If the attack was successful, the opponent's unfavorable rating should increase and the attacker's unfavorable rating should hold steady. If the attacker's unfavorable rating increases as much (or more) than the target's unfavorable rating, the possibility of a backlash from the attack would be seriously considered.

In 1994 Illinois, Edgar mounted a major advertising offensive in mid-June focusing on Netsch's crime votes and opposition to the death penalty. It is estimated that over the course of two weeks, the Edgar campaign spent roughly $750,000 saturating the electorate with these messages. At the end of June, Edgar's margin in the trial heat had climbed from +6 to +29, Netsch's net favorability (percent favorable minus percent unfavorable) dropped from +20 to +1, while Edgar's net favorability climbed from +33 to +45. When asked, open-ended, why they were supporting Edgar rather than Netsch, crime and the death penalty dominated the responses.

Under other circumstances, when both candidates are on the air with competing messages, measuring the effectiveness of advertising exposure is more difficult. It is not enough simply to ask voters if they remember seeing an ad, observe that the candidate is doing better with those who saw the ad than with those who did not see the ad, and conclude that the ad is effective. Those *already* more inclined to support the candidate in question will be more inclined to pay attention to "their" candidate's ads and to remember the content; those hardened against a particular candidate are more inclined to shut out communications from that candidate. Stronger partisans, who are the biggest political "fans," will have the strongest dedication to their party's nominee, and will therefore be the most likely to recall seeing their candidate's ads. A normal vote analysis helps this problem to some degree, because it introduces a control for strength of partisanship. The deviation from normal voting among those exposed can be compared to the deviation among those not reporting exposure. Although this is still an imperfect measure of advertising impact, it is better than a simple examination of the trial heat.

As election day draws nearer, the surveys become shorter and more frequent. The goal is to monitor or track key attitudes connected to the candidates and the race, and exposure to campaign communications, not to test major new initiatives or policies. It is common to include open-ended questions asking "what have you read, seen or heard lately about CANDIDATE NAME?" These, and other attitudes, will be closely tracked through September and October. Tracking polls help indicate when the electorate has been saturated with a particular message and when new messages are needed.

In 1994 Illinois, the advertising focused largely on crime over the summer but then shifted to other subjects in the early fall. Tracking polls found that although Edgar maintained a solid lead in the fall, the crime issue started to slip from voters' minds. When evidence of this emerged, crime was reinserted into the mix of media messages.

Conclusion

The dissertation argues that campaigns in subpresidential elections serve the important function of connecting voters with preferred candidates, creating order in voter preferences. This chapter has explored the manner in which a particular campaign organization attempts to link its own candidate with voters who share that candidate's preferences, and convince voters that its own candidate is a better fit with their own values and preferences than is the opponent.

The chapter has often referred to the case of 1994 Illinois as an example. In that gubernatorial race, by most objective measures Jim Edgar was closer to the state's median voter than was Dawn Clark Netsch. The race began as a statistical dead heat, but voters were poorly informed about Netsch's past voting record and proposals for the future. Edgar enjoyed solid job performance (58 percent approve) ratings and personal favorability (63 percent favorable); relatively few voters even knew enough about Netsch to form a favorable (44 percent) or unfavorable (24 percent) impression of her in April. It could be argued that the statistical tie in April was the product of an electorate casting its vote based largely on partisan and idiosyncratic considerations[25], rather than a well-informed consideration of the issue positions and records of each candidate. The Edgar campaign's use of strategic information identified those voters most in need of "education" about the two sides, and the types of issues about which voters needed the most additional information. *While Edgar's ensuing campaign activity had no altruistic public service motive, it did serve the collateral function of leading the Illinois electorate to vote more in line with its objective preferences.*

This chapter has established the ways in which campaign organizations use strategic information to further their self-interested aim of winning an election. In the process of doing so, campaigns broadcast messages designed to educate voters about the nature of the choice between the candidates. A salutary consequence of this self-interested pursuit is that voters often respond by ordering their preferences more consistently. In the case of 1994 Illinois, the research and campaign activity were largely successful in producing this outcome. Much of the remainder of the dissertation will assess the more general effectiveness of campaigns in ordering voter preferences, including additional details about the over-time transformation of the 1994 Illinois electorate.

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[25] Such as Dawn Clark Netsch's ability to sink trick pool shots.

It should be kept in mind, however, that this process of transformation is neither simple nor tidy. It is no accident that the period leading up to election day is called a “campaign.” The parallels with military campaigns are legion. Although seldom bloody, at least in this country, political campaigns can be filled with just as much intrigue, calculation, and chaos. It is this last characteristic that should be kept most clearly in mind through the remainder of the dissertation. In their meetings, memoranda, and strategy sessions, campaign managers and consultants often project an image of generals gathered for councils of war. They lay out clear and specific strategies, with precise demographic targets for particular messages, and attempt to anticipate the responses of their opponent. In the end, however, the voter often hears a cacophonous din of information, charges, and counter-charges. Just as even the best training exercise is unable to reproduce the chaos of a real battlefield, no focus group or information given in a poll can reproduce the chaos of a real political campaign.

It should also be noted that not every contested election campaign necessarily produces greater voter consistency or rationality. My assumption is that both sides in the contest observe and respect some fundamental ethics and norms of truthfulness. It is difficult for campaign activity to produce a more responsible electorate when one or both of the campaigns is engaging is grossly irresponsible behavior. Some examples of grossly irresponsible behavior would include fabricating outright lies about one's own background, spreading slanderous or libelous messages about an opponent, sabotaging an opponent's events, and so forth.

An example of a borderline irresponsible tactic, which can have consequences for voting behavior, is the introduction of a "red herring" issue into campaign discourse, especially in the closing days of the race. The "red herring" is an objectively irrelevant issue or charge, which the attacker knows to be irrelevant, but which nonetheless requires a response from the attacked candidate. The goal is to take the opponent "off message," stop any momentum he may have been enjoying, and create confusion in the minds of voters who were otherwise planning to support that candidate. The attacked candidate then has the task of clearing up the confusion and drawing defectors back into the fold. When such an attack is made immediately preceding the election, there may not be enough time to clear up this confusion, and some number of voters casts a ballot contrary to underlying preferences.

Although it is possible for campaigns and political consultants to create more confusion than they clarify, it should be emphasized that truly malicious and dishonest campaigns are the exception rather than the rule. Baseless, slanderous charges against an opponent, or outright fabrications about one's own record, are eventually exposed by the media; the knowledge that such truths eventually come to light is usually enough to dissuade consultants tempted to engage in dirty pool. Moreover, although some of the campaigns analyzed in this dissertation had a very negative tone, none of them included grossly irresponsible behavior from either side.

I will demonstrate that in the end, despite the chaos and the occasional red herring, voters seem able to obtain the information they need to make responsible choices on election day. The voters most affected by the campaign and its attendant information may not have been the specific demographic targets of either side, and it is often impossible to determine the precise mix of campaign-related material any individual received from all the possible sources. But by observing an individual's voting behavior and a number of other key attitudes, it is often possible to use natural experimental methods to determine what *kinds* of information he *most likely* received — and the degree of influence this information had over his eventual candidate choices. The remainder of the dissertation will demonstrate that campaign activity is profoundly important for ordering voter preferences in statewide elections.

CHAPTER 3

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY AND ELECTION DAY CONSISTENCY

The preceding chapters have reviewed previous research concerning the impact of campaigns on election outcomes and voting behavior, established a general theory of campaign effects, and examined the use campaigns make of strategic information to achieve their aims. Campaigns exercise some influence over election outcomes, but the dissertation's focus is on a more interesting normative question: the degree to which campaigns influence *voting behavior*. This chapter investigates the degree to which voters are able, on election day, to organize various ballot choices and connect those choices with other political and ideological preferences — and the manner in which the *degree of campaign activity* influences the *degree of consistency* voters evidence.

One general problem with investigating voter consistency is that post-election survey respondents sometimes do not remember how they voted on election day (especially in lower information races, where the decision may not have been important enough to have been remembered). Similar problems can plague pre-election surveys; respondents may change their minds before election day, and may not even turn out on election day.

Suppose it was possible to spend election day unobtrusively looking over the shoulders of a large number of widely varied voters. We would likely observe that some individuals' ballot punch cards seem substantially more internally consistent than others. If the ballot included both partisan office contests and ideologically charged initiative measures, some voters might make a closer connection than other voters between partisan office choices and ideological policy preferences. To what degree are such differences associated with differences in exposure to campaign activity? Campaign activity produces information about the competing candidates, and information helps voters choose in a more consistent manner. It would follow that voters in more competitive areas, with a richer information environment, ought to display more consistency between choices for partisan office candidates and ideological measures.

Continuing this election day thought experiment, suppose that all voters had been exposed to extensive campaign activity for one set of measures but minimal campaign information for another set. Putting all of the voters' ballots together, the electorate as a whole ought to show substantial structure in and consistency between its choices for the high information items. By contrast, choices across the low information items ought to be much less structured and much more capricious.

This chapter makes just such an investigation, utilizing an unusual set of data, with a novel experimental approach: images of actual ballots cast by Los Angeles County voters in one particular year. Some of the races, including ballot measures and many offices, were included on all L.A. County ballots. Among these, some were highly contested and others were not — but each item's overall level of campaign activity (high or low) was fairly uniform across the County. Other races varied by district within the County, with considerable differences in campaign activity across districts. It is thus possible to examine and compare patterns of voter behavior in the face of high information and low information. In the presence of a contested, two-sided campaign, voters should grow more informed about the candidates or ballot measures in question, and make choices which are more consistent with other preferences. When campaign activity is lacking, voters should behave more randomly.

To test these hypotheses, I will examine the behavior of a quarter of a million 1994 Los Angeles County general election voters. In that year, some state assembly and senate races were fiercely competitive; others engendered only token opposition to an entrenched incumbent. Some ballot initiatives inspired passionate debate and substantial spending on both sides; others were largely ignored, with little spent in either support or opposition. I find that voters were able to organize the highly-contested ballot measures into “economic” and “social” dimensions, but were less able to differentiate among the uncontested measures. In competitive assembly and senate districts, residents made significantly closer connections between state legislative vote choice and preferences for the highly-contested ballot measures than did their neighbors in noncompetitive districts. Finally, I examine judicial retention races as an interesting example of the extreme of low information. None of the nineteen state judges standing for retention engaged in much campaign activity or inspired organized opposition, and little publicity was given to any of them. Consequently, despite stark ideological and philosophical differences among the nineteen judges, voters were unable to organize their choices in this section of the ballot and unable to connect those choices with ideological or partisan preferences.

Data and Methodology

I compiled electronic images of all 249,461 ballots cast in 868 Los Angeles County precincts for the 1994 general election. These precincts constitute a geographically and demographically representative sample of the County's 6,109 total precincts. They are drawn from throughout the County, from the Antelope and Santa Clarita valleys in the north to Long Beach in the south. More importantly, the racial composition of the sample precincts almost perfectly parallels that of the entire County. As the appendix details, both the sample precincts and the County as a whole have a racial breakdown that is roughly half non-Latino white, one-third Latino, ten percent Asian, and ten percent black. Furthermore, had the 1994 election been held only in these precincts, outcomes for all partisan races and ballot initiatives would have been within a few percentage points of the overall County results.

The ballots themselves are a tremendous resource, allowing researchers to "look over the shoulder" of hundreds of thousands of voters. Accessing these ballots is quite difficult, however. The County stores ballot images in an obscure COBOL-based column binary format on round-reel magnetic tapes. After translating the punch card images into ASCII (a formidable task), the researcher has 312 variables (one for each of the punch positions on the voter's card) for each of the 249,461 cases.[26] If a given position was punched, it is recorded as "1". Unpunched positions are shown as "0."

From the 312 individual punch positions, new variables can be constructed representing all the races on the ballot. For example, the first five punch positions in 1994 corresponded to the gubernatorial race; based on which of the holes was punched, voters were assigned a code of 1 (Wilson, Republican), 2 (Brown, Democrat), 3 (Rider, Libertarian), 4 (LaRiva, Peace & Freedom), or 5 (McCready, American Independent) for the gubernatorial vote variable. If no box was punched, the voter was coded as having abstained; if two or more boxes were punched, the voter was coded as "invalid" for that race. This process was then repeated for all of the dozens of races on the ballot.[27] From these new variables, it is possible to determine voter patterns across all eleven partisan office contests,[28] all the ballot measures, and every other race.

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[26] It should be noted that in nearly every analysis, the extraordinarily large number of cases makes the results significant at an extremely low p value. Unless otherwise noted, the reader should assume that every result is significant far below $p<.001$. All analysis was conducted in SPSS release 7.5.

Rationality in Ballot Measure Voting

This section investigates the degree of consistency or "rationality" in voting on statewide ballot measures, and the manner in which these vote patterns are related to the degree of campaign activity (high or low) associated with those measures.

There were ten statewide ballot measures on which all L.A. County voters could register a yes or no vote. Five of these were placed on the ballot by the state legislature (181, 183, 189, 190, 191), while the other five reached the ballot through public petition drives. In ballot order, the focus of the ten measures was as follows:

- 181: Clean air bond, would have sold state-backed bonds to raise money for mass transit such as light rail.

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[27] Complicating matters, however, names in all partisan contests are rotated by assembly district; Kathleen Brown might correspond to punch #1 in some precincts but punch #4 in others. In addition, varying numbers of local races (with varying numbers of candidates) also made the precise ballot layout vary from precinct to precinct. All told, there are hundreds of versions of the ballot across Los Angeles County, and building a final data file from these ballots was an enormous undertaking. Those interested in obtaining these data and replicating my analysis should contact the Los Angeles County Registrar's office at 562/462-2748. It is located at 12400 Imperial Hwy., Norwalk, CA 90651.

[28] Races on the ballot, in ballot order: Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, Controller, Treasurer, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, State Board of Equalization, U.S. Senator, U.S. Congress, State Senate, and State Assembly. State Senators serve staggered four-year terms, with half the districts contested in each general election. Therefore only half of the ballots in my sample included a State Senate election.

- 183: Change rules regarding recall of state officials.
- 184: Tough mandatory prison sentences for someone convicted of a third felony offense (“Three Strikes”).
- 185: Gas tax increase.
- 186: Establish Canadian-style “single payer” health system in California.
- 187: Deny public services to illegal immigrants.
- 188: Replace local smoking laws with a single (looser) statewide standard.
- 189: Allow judges to deny bail to someone accused of felonious sexual assault.
- 190: Greatly restructure state judicial performance commission (oversees judges).
- 191: Convert rural “justice courts” into “municipal courts.”

These measures covered a wide variety of subjects, and received varying amounts of media coverage and campaign activity. Measures 181, 184, 185, 187, and 188 featured by far the most campaign activity and media coverage, with 187 and 184 receiving the most of all. By contrast, there was very little money spent either promoting or opposing measures 183, 189, 190, or 191, and these measures received only a few passing references in the Los Angeles *Times* in the weeks and months leading up to the election.

An important aspect of voter rationality is consistency of individual proposition votes. Philip Converse’s (1964) discussion of belief systems in mass publics, while not focused specifically on proposition voting, has remained the classic statement of voter sophistication (or lack thereof). Converse found that very few voters had a coherent belief system, or “configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence." In a 1958 study, for example, the correlations between specific issue beliefs were very low for the general public --- and, when tracked over time, individuals' opinions on particular issues were highly volatile. Converse concluded, therefore, that "low constraint among belief elements in the mass public are not products of well knit but highly idiosyncratic belief systems." Converse's findings imply that many people should vote capriciously and inconsistently for propositions, especially those which were not well publicized.

John Mueller (1969), in an examination of ballot punch cards from the 1964 election in California (a project similar to my own), was able to investigate voters' actual patterns of proposition voting across the ballot --- and he found almost no relationship between individual proposition vote choices. In 1964, there were nearly as many unique patterns of proposition votes as there were ballots, and as many as 60 percent cast a capricious or contradictory vote on at least one of two propositions concerning the state lottery. The only logical source of influence Mueller unearthed was partisan in nature; for those few measures on which the Democratic party campaigned and made its preferences known, there was an association between a person's proposition vote and his selections for partisan offices. Otherwise, Mueller concluded, "voting on the propositions is a strikingly idiosyncratic process."

One reason for Mueller's finding of few other patterns in proposition balloting may have been the nature of the times; the 1964 propositions were largely non-ideological and most were placed on the ballot by the state legislature. And with the exception of the two lottery items, few of the propositions seemed to have anything objectively in common with each other. More recent years, by contrast, have seen a greater incidence of ideologically-charged propositions which evoke underlying cues and cleavages; as a result, there may be greater consistency now than in 1964[29].

If voters are largely capricious, they should miss the ideological cues present in particular propositions. There should be uniformly high or uniformly low correlations between individual proposition votes, meaning that voters are either (1) blindly yea or nay saying across many different ballot measures (uniformly high correlations) or (2) vote patterns are truly capricious and unconstrained by choices on other measures (uniformly low correlations). If, by contrast, voters are more sophisticated, there should be significant correlations between individual proposition votes for those measures which (1) raise salient ideological cues and (2) were publicized with enough campaign dollars to make voters aware of that ideological content.

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[29] It should also be noted that the computing and statistical techniques available in the mid-1960s pale in comparison to today's. It is possible that the techniques available to Mueller were simply unable to uncover more substantial patterns of voter consistency. Also, Mueller's ballots were all drawn from a single (suburban) Los Angeles precinct.

There should be relatively little association between proposition votes for promoted ideological measures and those which were not promoted, regardless of ideological content. Furthermore, if voters are relatively sophisticated, factor analysis should yield distinctive and logical substantive patterns of choices on propositions. If not, no factors should emerge from the data.

Consistency Between Choices

I coded each of the proposition votes as a trichotomy: No (-1), Abstain/Invalid[30] (0), or Yes (+1). Table 3-1 summarizes the correlations between individual proposition votes. Importantly, correlations between individual measures are neither uniformly high nor uniformly low, indicating a distinct structure to voters' choices. I have arranged the items in the correlation matrix by the size of interrelationships between items.

The first four measures (183, 189, 190, and 191) were all highly correlated with each other and were largely uncorrelated with other items (the exception, 189's correlation with 184, will be discussed in the factor analysis section). All four of these items were placed on the ballot by the state legislature; these measures tended to be highly technical and focused on restructuring government rules or organization. As noted above, none of these inspired serious opposition or much campaign spending on either side, and none garnered more than a few brief mentions in the Los Angeles *Times* in the weeks leading up to the election.

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[30] A voter punching neither "yes" nor "no" is said to have "abstained" for a given measure. A voter punching both "yes" and "no" is referred to by election authorities as "invalid" and treated as if he had made no choice at all for that measure.

The next three items are also highly correlated with each other but largely uncorrelated with other items. Each of the items was fundamentally "economic" in nature: a bond measure to build passenger rail transportation (Proposition 181), a gasoline tax increase (Proposition 185), and public funding of health care (Proposition 186). The next two items, which tend to go with each other but not with other items, are more "social," capturing the anti-illegal immigration Proposition 187 and the anti-crime "three strikes and you're out" Proposition 184.

Table 3-1: Correlations between 1994 Ballot Measure Votes

Proposition Number	**Proposition Number**								
	190	**191**	**183**	**189**	**181**	**185**	**186**	**184**	**187**
190	1.00								
191	**.55**	1.00							
183	**.40**	**.37**	1.00						
189	**.43**	**.35**	**.35**	1.00					
181	.11	.09	.19	-.01	1.00				
185	.06	.08	.08	-.13	**.56**	1.00			
186	.12	.07	.10	-.08	**.41**	**.48**	1.00		
184	.08	.02	.06	**.43**	-.06	-.21	-.17	1.00	
187	.00	.01	-.08	.16	-.24	-.26	-.26	**.48**	1.00
188	-.03	-.02	-.05	-.04	.13	-.01	.10	.10	.20

Votes coded +1 (yes), -1 (no), or 0 (abstain, invalid). Correlation coefficient is gamma.
Results based on 249,461 ballots cast in 1994 L.A. County general election.

Proposition 188, which would have replaced local anti-smoking laws with a single (looser) statewide smoking statute, was the only item largely uncorrelated with anything else. This item was unique in one important respect: it was the only highly-publicized measure without clear ideological content. Voter categorization of this measure will be examined in more detail and discussed further in the factor analysis section.

Factor Analysis: Underlying Dimensions to Ballot Measure Choices

Factor analysis confirms that there were three distinct dimensions around which voters patterned their choices in 1994; together these three dimensions explain nearly half (48.5 percent) of the variance in proposition voting. The three dimensions give further clarity to the structure the correlation matrix (Table 3-1) suggested. The first factor consists of four measures placed on the ballot by the state legislature; as noted in the previous section, these measures tended to be highly technical and focused on restructuring government rules or organization.

The other two factors capture those issues which both evoked underlying ideological cleavages and *did* inspire substantial spending on both sides — and shed some light on the way voters evaluated Proposition 188. Factor 2 includes those which are more “economic” in nature: the bond measure to build passenger rail transportation (Proposition 181), the gasoline tax increase (Proposition 185), and public funding of health care (Proposition

186). Factor 3 puts together the three "social" measures; it includes the anti-illegal immigration Proposition 187, the anti-crime "three strikes and you're out" Proposition 184, *and*, importantly, the measure (Proposition 188) which would have replaced local anti-smoking laws with a single (looser) statewide smoking statute. Although the correlation matrix (Table 3-1) indicated that choices for Proposition 188 do not correlate with preferences for either Proposition 187 or Proposition 184, factor analysis suggests that voters did treat it in much the same way as these other social items. This seems to indicate that while voters recognize the same general dimension underlying all three measures, voters also recognize that Proposition 188 does not carry the same ideological implications as Propositions 187 and 184.

Table 3-2
Factor Analysis of 1994 Ballot Measures
(Rotated varimax solution)

		Un-contested	**Contested: Economic**	**Contested: Social**
Prop #	**Variance explained = 48.5%**	**18.2%**	**16.4%**	**13.9%**
190	Judicial performance commission	**.751**	.057	-.018
191	Make Justice Courts Municipal Courts	**.718**	.032	-.065
183	Allow recall of officials	**.596**	.160	-.070
189	Bail exception-sexual assault	**.582**	-.062	.333
181	Rail bond	.088	**.742**	.048
185	Gas tax	.063	**.704**	-.085
186	Single-payer health system	.044	**.652**	-.069
184	Three Strikes	.118	-.078	**.737**
187	Anti-Immigration	-.002	-.256	**.670**
188	Smoking laws	-.140	.245	**.510**

Importantly, taken together, the factor analysis and correlation matrix reflect more than a simple separation of popular initiatives from those placed on the ballot by the legislature. Rather, it shows that when campaign dollars are spent to publicize the pros and cons of particular measures, voters can tell the difference between a rail bond, which evokes economic policy, and legislative resolutions which are purely technical in substance. Also, voters make a further distinction between initiative measures which involve "economic" matters (costing money) and those which address "social" issues (such as immigration, crime, and smoking).

Proposition 189 deserves special mention. The measure's subject was crime, and as such "should" have been included in the Social factor. In reality, however, the measure was so non-controversial[31] that it inspired little campaign activity on either side. Its primary loading is on the "uncontested" factor, but it also has a substantial cross-loading on the social factor. Without campaign activity to guide them, voters still recognized this as a social policy measure to some extent — but did not treat it the same way they treated other social policy measures. Had "accused-criminal rights" groups (perhaps the ACLU?) devoted resources to fighting such a measure, voters may have seen it in more of the same light with which they evaluated the other social measures — causing it to load higher on the social factor. As it is, without campaign discourse to guide them, voters tended to lump it more with the other uncontested technical/governmental measures.

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[31] The measure sailed through the legislature, winning unanimous approval in both chambers, and won 81 percent of the Los Angeles County vote in November.

Furthermore, looking at the substance of the two measures, all or nearly all of those who opposed 189 should have also opposed 184. All or nearly all of those approving 184 should have also approved of 189. In reality, however, the substance of 184 was much more widely publicized than the substance of 189. This disparity of information led to a substantial number of “errors” in vote consistency. Among those disapproving of 189, fully half voted *yes* on 184; only 46 percent voted no on 184 (the remainder abstained for 184). Among those supporting 184, 80 percent supported 189 and 13 percent voted no on 189. As it is, the correlation of votes between the two measures was still quite strong — but with additional publicity of 189, voters may have been able to make an even stronger connection between them.

Connecting Partisan and Proposition Votes

Campaign activity in partisan office contests should have the effect of better publicizing candidate issue positions and making those issue positions more salient in voters’ minds. As a result, voters with more exposure to campaign activity should be more likely to connect their own issue preferences with candidate choice than voters with little exposure to campaign activity.

The reality in Los Angeles County (and many other parts of the country) is that only some state legislative districts are competitive; most others are not. Gerrymandering of district lines and candidate incumbency often conspire to make certain districts a virtual lock for one party or the other. The candidate of the favored party, often an entrenched incumbent, coasts to victory while the "challenger" spends next-to-nothing on his token candidacy[32]. Voters in such districts may hear glowing messages about the personal qualities of the incumbent, but little (if anything) about the challenger. It can be assumed that in such districts, the candidates' differences on even the most visible and current public policy issues seldom become salient to voters, if those differences are discussed at all. In other districts, by contrast, both candidates spend enough money to at least make a show of an earnest campaign. Even though one candidate may end up being far outspent by the other, both candidates do engage in some kind of communication with voters.

The presence of these two different kinds of districts in the same county provides the conditions for a natural experiment. Voters in "more contested" and "less contested" districts reside in the same media market and are exposed to the same advertising for and against the statewide ballot measures. The difference is that voters in more contested districts are much more likely to be exposed to messages detailing where the two state legislative candidates stand on various issues of the day — including each of those salient ballot measures. Residents of less contested districts are considerably less likely to be so exposed.

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[32] One Republican state assembly candidate in a heavily Democratic district spent less than $100 on the general election. Rather than file a campaign finance disclosure report with the Secretary of State, he instead sent a simple letter saying that he hadn't spent any money. He went on to explain that he filed for candidacy with no expectation of winning, or even waging a viable campaign --- his goal, rather, was to advance in the party organization. Having his name on the ballot as a Republican candidate in fact ended up greatly helping to further this goal, he added. It is not clear whether he realized this letter would remain on file in the public archives in Sacramento.

The State of California requires all candidates to file a statement disclosing the source of campaign contributions and outlays. All of these files are available to the public in the state archives in Sacramento. I compiled total 1994 spending data for all state assembly and state senate candidates who appeared on the ballot in Los Angeles County. Although determining the dividing line between a "more contested" and "less contested" district is necessarily somewhat arbitrary and subjective, $25,000 seems to be a reasonable cut-off. In a major metropolitan area such as Los Angeles, it is difficult to establish much of a message at all with less than this amount. Those districts in which both major party candidates spent at least $25,000 are classified as "more contested"; those in which one or both candidates fell short of this mark are considered "less contested[33]". (The two assembly districts with no Republican candidate at all are excluded from this analysis.) By this standard, of the eight Senate districts which include L.A. County, three districts with 70,715 ballots are considered “more contested”; five districts with 52,012 ballots are “less contested”. Of the County’s 22 assembly districts with major party candidates, nine districts with 123,296 ballots are considered “more contested”; thirteen districts with 108,574 ballots are “less contested”[34]. In a few instances, spending data for one of the major party assembly candidates was missing at the archives. In all but one of these cases[35], it was clear from the context of the election that the candidate in question had in fact spent a considerable sum. For purposes of classifying the district, I treated each of the high profile “missing file” candidates as having spent at least $25,000. The appendix includes complete details about the amount spent and percentage of the vote garnered by both major party candidates in all districts.

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[33] Although I am tempted to refer to these districts as simply "contested" and "uncontested," the latter term is usually reserved for districts with only one candidate on the ballot. To avoid confusion, I am using the somewhat more awkward terms "more contested" and "less contested."

It should be emphasized that “more contested” does *not* mean that both candidates had reasonable chances of winning or that the race in a given district had a close margin; in fact, several of the races here treated as “more contested” ended up as blowouts. For the purposes of this analysis, “more contested” simply means that both candidates had a reasonable opportunity to communicate campaign messages to the residents of a given district.

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[34] The careful reader will note that in both cases there are more ballots in the competitive districts than in the noncompetitive — even though there are fewer competitive than noncompetitive districts. This is because state legislative district lines in California are drawn based on number of residents, *not* based on number of citizens or eligible voters. The noncompetitive districts tend to be heavily minority, with relatively low turnout and/or relatively large numbers of non-citizens.

[35] Barbara Friedman, a powerful incumbent in the 40th district; Diane Martinez, a strong incumbent in the 49th district, Steve Kuykendall, who narrowly won an extremely close race in the 54th District, and Richard Mountjoy, who was running simultaneously for reelection in the 59th district and for election to the state senate in a 29th District special election. Mountjoy spent a large amount of money promoting himself, as is evidenced from his senate campaign disclosure statement, but his assembly campaign statement was missing from the archives. The one exception is the 61st District, where data for Democratic challenger Larry Silva is missing. Because it is not clear if he managed to reach the $25,000 threshold, the district is excluded from analysis. This exclusion should not affect the analysis much, because only a tiny sliver of it (879 ballots) falls in Los Angeles County.

I will first confirm that for all voters, regardless of district type, the five contested ideological measures were indeed associated with legislative candidate choice to a much greater degree than were the other five measures. To measure the degree to which each ballot measure was associated with candidate choice, I recoded vote choices into simple dichotomies. Senate and assembly votes were coded +1 (Republican) or –1 (Democrat); all ballot measure votes were coded +1 (yes) or –1 (no). In all cases, minor party votes and abstentions were made missing. It was then a fairly straightforward matter to crosstab each ballot measure vote by state senate and assembly votes, and compute a measure of association (gamma). Table 3-3 shows that the results are as expected: the ideological measures with considerable two-sided campaign spending (Propositions 181 and 184-187) “fit” with legislative votes to a much greater degree than the less-publicized measures and those lacking objective ideological content. Note that although Proposition 188 loaded on the same “social” factor as 184 and 187, and it was highly publicized, this measure lacked objective ideological content. As a result, it stands as an important exception — and votes on this measure were not correlated with support for partisan office candidates.

Table 3-3: Consistency of 1994 L.A. County General Election State Legislative and Ballot Measure Votes

	Strength of Correlation		N of Cases	
Measure	**Senate Vote**	**Assembly Vote**	**Senate**	**Assembly**
Immigration (187)	.70	.72	101,743	196,055
Three Strikes (184)	.53	.57	97,832	188,771
Smoking laws (188)	.01	.09	100,916	194,575
Health care (186)	-.58	-.62	99,288	191,581
Rail bond (181)	-.43	-.44	96,284	185,715
Gas tax (185)	-.35	-.43	97,373	187,856
Allow recall (183)	-.20	-.27	90,492	177,105
Judicial performance (190)	-.16	-.18	91,183	174,761
Bail-sexual assault (189)	.12	.10	95,874	184,577
Justice courts (191)	-.05	-.08	89,567	171,289

Statistics are gamma for relationship between legislative vote and each ballot measure vote. Legislative votes coded -1 (Democrat) or +1 (Republican), with abstentions and all other choices missing. Ballot measure votes coded -1 (No) or +1 (Yes) with abstentions missing. Two assembly districts with no Republican candidate excluded from analysis.

The more interesting question is the degree to which voters in more contested districts were *especially* likely to connect partisan votes with ballot measure choices. To make this comparison across districts as direct and clear as possible, I constructed a simple measure of consistency: the percent choosing in a "consistent" manner[36]. For example, suppose that in a given district 25 percent of the people voted Republican for state senate and Yes on

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[36] The analysis assumes that all assembly and senate candidates held positions on all five ideological 1994 measures that were consistent with the ideological orientation of their respective parties. It is possible that certain assembly and/or senate candidates may have taken (and even publicized) positions on certain ideological ballot measures which differed from their party's orientation, but it is nearly impossible for a researcher seven years removed from the election in question to document each candidate's position on every measure. This is a possible source of error for the analysis.

Proposition 184; suppose further that 27 percent voted Democrat for senate and No on 184. Fifty-two percent of that district would be considered "consistent." Table 3-4 compares the degree of consistency for the ideological measures in more contested versus less contested senate and assembly districts. (The non-ideological measures are omitted because "consistency" is nearly impossible to define objectively in those cases.)

Table 3-4: Percent of L.A. County 1994 General Election Voters Casting a Consistent Legislative an Ideological Measure Vote by District Competitiveness

	State Senate			State Assembly		
	More Contested	Less Contested	Net More Contested	More Contested	Less Contested	Net More Contested
Rail Bond (181)	46.9	42.6	4.3	47.9	46.8	1.0
Three Strikes (184)	48.2	39.7	8.6	51.5	45.6	5.9
Gas Tax (185)	45.0	30.3	14.7	47.9	39.6	8.3
Health Care (186)	51.2	42.6	8.6	54.0	48.3	5.7
Immigration (187)	55.9	57.3	-1.5	61.5	56.5	4.9

"Consistent" vote is Democrat and 181 Yes, 184 No, 185 Yes, 186 Yes, 187 No; Republican and 181 No, 184 Yes, 185 No, 186 No, 187

Note that in nearly every instance, those residing in more contested districts displayed more consistency than those in less contested districts. Although the spreads are not always large, nine of the ten are in the expected direction (and the exception, Proposition 187, will be discussed below). The greatest spread between more contested and less contested district consistency was for Proposition 185, the gas tax increase. Voters in more contested senate and assembly districts were much more likely than their counterparts in less contested districts to connect candidate choice with gas tax preference. The consistency spread was possibly highest for this measure because tax policy is one of the core differences between the two parties. To the extent that voters become aware of candidate differences on any issues, taxation is likely to be one of the most prominent.

Proposition 187 deserves special mention. It was by far the most controversial measure on the ballot in 1994, and inspired the most media coverage. The media coverage was so intense, it was difficult to miss in any corner of the County (or the state). The measure also became closely associated with the two parties, with the gubernatorial candidates and other high-ranking partisans staking out sharply polarized positions. It would be surprising, therefore, if this measure did *not* become the most closely associated with partisan voting in districts of all kinds. In fact, in more contested and less contested districts alike, voters evidenced more consistency between 187 and office vote choice than for any other measure. Curiously, those in *less* contested senate districts were even more consistent for 187 than were those in more contested districts. The opposite was true on the assembly side. One reason for this pattern is that of the five less contested senate districts, four were heavily Latino and featured a Latino Democratic candidate versus a non-Latino Republican. Because Proposition 187 was especially salient in the Latino community, and so many of these voters were inclined to both oppose 187 and support a Democratic senate candidate, it would be natural to expect large levels of consistency in these districts. In the four Latino senate districts, 187 consistency ranged from 57 percent to 62 percent; in the non-competitive — but heavily black — 26th senate district, 187 consistency was only 50 percent. By contrast, the less contested *assembly* districts were more of a mixed bag; they included some heavily-Latino areas, but also more areas that were heavily black, heavily Republican, or heavily Jewish. Proposition 187 was not as intensely salient for these other groups as it was for Latinos.

There is one potential problem with the whole analysis in this section: it assumes no other differences, apart from the amount of campaign activity, between more contested and less contested districts. As the foregoing example with Proposition 187 demonstrates, the composition of the districts themselves can have an additional impact on voting. One potentially important consideration is the level of education in various districts. If the more contested districts feature better-educated electorates, the observed greater consistency in more contested districts could be a function of that greater level of education.

Because Census data are published at the Congressional District level, it is possible to make some rough estimations of the level of education in various other political divisions, based on the relationship of those divisions with the Congressional Districts. As it turns out, the more contested assembly districts have significantly better-educated voters (80 percent have a high school diploma, 31 percent have a college degree) than the less contested districts (68 percent have a high school diploma, 18 percent have a college degree. The same is true on the senate side: the more contested districts are better educated (75 percent have high school diplomas, 24 percent have college degrees) than the less contested districts (59 percent have high school diplomas, 15 percent have college degrees) do.

Although it is not possible to control for education in the analysis, because no one knows the educational attainment of the individual voters who showed up at the polls, if these voters are even roughly representative of the districts where they live, it is likely that those in more contested districts were substantially better educated than their counterparts in less contested districts. It is therefore possible that some, and perhaps all, of the consistency differential observed between more contested and less contested districts has its roots in these educational differences.

Patterns of Judicial Retention Voting

Finally, I investigate a class of races with virtually no campaign activity on either side: judicial retention elections. The nineteen judges on the ballot evidenced considerable ideological and partisan diversity. However, without campaign activity to guide the electorate, voters were utterly unable to organize these nineteen retention and rejection decisions.

In California, Supreme Court justices are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments. The appointments are confirmed by the public at the next gubernatorial election; justices also come before voters at the end of their 12-year terms. Each division of the appellate courts has a presiding justice and two or more associate justices, also appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Commission on Judicial Appointments. The same rules governing the selection and retention of Supreme Court justices apply to those serving on the Courts of Appeal. In 1994, Los Angeles County voters were asked to decide nineteen retention elections, including three associate Supreme Court justices and sixteen appeals court judges[37]. All nineteen were retained, with "yes" percentages in Los Angeles County ranging from 59 percent to 68 percent.

Judicial retention elections are usually very low information affairs, with little (if any) active campaigning either for or against sitting judges. Salience of judicial candidates is often extremely low; even in competitive judicial elections (with multiple candidates vying for the same position), few voters are able to recall the names of candidates for either the state supreme court or state courts of appeals (Johnson, Shaefer & McKnight, 1978). This is not surprising, given the scant publicity which judicial contests usually receive. In 1994, the Los Angeles *Times* did not publish a single story which even discussed the retention of any of the 19 judges facing County voters (let alone offer endorsements). Apart from a handful of stories reporting on court cases and decisions (none of which was controversial), the names of these 19 judges did not even appear in the *Times* between Labor Day and Election Day.[38] Judicial retention elections therefore seem to be an excellent place to investigate how voters behave in the absence of campaign activity.

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[37] These sixteen judges all sit on the Second District of the State Court of Appeal. The sixteen include judges from all seven Divisions within the Second District. All seven Divisions cover the Counties of Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura. Los Angeles County accounts for 82 percent of the votes in the Second District.

Not surprisingly, many voters skip these extremely low-information races entirely. Table 3-5 details the percentage of voters who participated in various types of contests (judicial and otherwise) in 1994. Among Los Angeles County voters who turned out, 46 percent participated in all judicial retention decisions — but 28 percent completely skipped this section of the ballot. By contrast, more than two-thirds participated in all partisan office contests or all ballot measure decisions; only a handful neglected either of these two sections entirely. Because part of this differential in complete participation is due to the 1994 ballot including more merit retention decisions (n=19) than ballot measures (n=10) or partisan office contests (n=11), Table 3-5 also includes the *average* percentage of races in which voters participated for each section of the ballot. The average voter participated in 92 percent of partisan office races and 89 percent of direct legislation contests — but only 61 percent of merit retention decisions.

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[38] The *Times* did run one story (Bray, 1994) reporting Bar evaluations of one of these judges — but only in the Ventura County edition of the newspaper, and only for his performance as a trial court judge.

Table 3-5
Participation and Rolloff by Contest Type

		Percent of Voters Participating in:		Average Proportion of Contests Participating in
	N=	All	None	
Partisan Offices	11	76.8	.7	92.3
Ballot Measures	10	69.3	1.2	88.7
All State Judges	19	46.4	27.5	61.1

Consistent with results from around the state, the typical judge in Los Angeles County won retention in 1994 with just over 60 percent of the yes/no votes cast on his or her name. The typical person voted to retain an average of 38.1 percent judges and reject an average of 23.1 percent (and abstained for the remaining contests).

These averages, however, mask a considerable degree of yea-saying and nay-saying. Just under one-fifth (19.5 percent) voted to retain all nineteen judges; one in thirteen (8 percent) voted to reject all nineteen judges. Interestingly, this means that well over half (55 percent) of the electorate voted the same way (either yes, no, or abstain) across all nineteen retention decisions. By contrast, very few voted the same way — either yes (.5 percent), no (1.0 percent), or abstain (1.2 percent) — for all ten ballot measures.

I attempted to perform a factor analysis of judicial retention votes, but the analysis would not produce more than one factor. In other words, factor analysis could not recognize substantive patterns to retention votes across these nineteen judges. Even when I forced two factors out of the analysis, the two factors were very muddled; most judges had similar loadings on both factors. This suggests that voters did not use recognizable patterns, to any significant degree, to organize their choices in this section of the ballot.

I built a matrix of correlations between votes[39] for individual judges, to investigate any other substantive patterns which might put certain judges together in voters' minds. Uniformly low correlations would indicate voters were "flipping a coin" when deciding how to vote; uniformly high correlations would suggest voters were making similar decisions (retain, reject or abstain) across many judges. A mix of high and low correlations would point to more substantive principles of organization in voters' minds.

In fact, the correlations between judicial votes are uniformly very high; almost all of the correlation coefficients are at least gamma=.50, and the average correlation is gamma=.63. Some of the individual correlations are quite strong — but there is very little of substance which seems to link these high-correlation judges together. Those with higher correlations had not, for example, been appointed by the same governor, been in office for a comparable number of years, or shared the same party affiliation. (The appendix provides this substantive information about judges.) The best that can be concluded from these universally strong correlations is that, as described above, voters who chose to retain one judge also tended to retain many judges; those who voted to reject one judge also tended to reject many other judges. Those who abstained also did so often.

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[39] Judicial votes coded -1 (No), 0 (abstain) and +1 (Yes).

Table 3-6: Correlation of Judicial Retention Vote Choices

		Justices																	
	Justice Name	J1	J2	J3	J4	J5	J6	J7	J8	J9	J10	J11	J12	J13	J14	J15	J16	J17	J18
J1	Joyce Kennard	1.0																	
J2	Ronald George	.60																	
J3	Kathryn Werdegar	.66	.59																
J4	William Masterson	.58	.63	.51															
J5	Reuben Ortega	.55	.51	.51	.60														
J6	Roger Boren	.57	.63	.52	.77	.64													
J7	Michael Nott	.58	.63	.53	.76	.64	.80												
J8	Richard Aldrich	.57	.62	.52	.77	.63	.78	.79											
J9	Patti Kitching	.64	.54	.60	.67	.67	.70	.71	.71										
J10	Arleigh Woods	.61	.57	.54	.71	.63	.72	.72	.73	.74									
J11	Charles Vogel	.49	.53	.52	.65	.56	.67	.68	.67	.61	.65								
J12	Norman Epstein	.57	.57	.51	.69	.64	.71	.71	.72	.68	.71	.65							
J13	J Gary Hastings	.52	.55	.52	.69	.55	.67	.68	.69	.61	.63	.65	.62						
J14	Orville Armstrong	.44	.48	.46	.59	.49	.59	.59	.60	.54	.58	.66	.58	.68					
J15	Margaret Gringnon	.62	.53	.58	.64	.62	.65	.67	.65	.74	.68	.57	.64	.63	.55				
J16	Ramona Perez	.55	.48	.51	.65	.74	.58	.59	.59	.66	.62	.50	.62	.55	.50	.71			
J17	Steven Stone	.55	.59	.48	.71	.57	.71	.70	.71	.64	.69	.61	.69	.69	.63	.66	.61		
J18	Kenneth Yegan	.51	.56	.53	.67	.57	.69	.69	.68	.62	.64	.67	.65	.73	.68	.64	.59	.71	
J19	Fred Woods	.56	.60	.50	.72	.60	.73	.73	.72	.66	.70	.63	.68	.71	.63	.69	.61	.78	.74

Votes coded +1 (retain), -1 (reject), or 0 (abstain, invalid). Correlation coefficient is gamma. Results based on 249,461 ballots cast in 1994 L.A. County general election.

Without campaign activity to provide more information about these judges and their records, voters proved unable to make more substantive connections between individual retention votes. For example, Reuben Ortega is a registered Republican and describes himself as a judicial conservative. Ramona Perez is a registered Democrat and a former civil rights attorney. The two judges have little in common save Latino surnames, which usually signal an underlying left-of-center bent. If voters had been more fully informed about the two judges' records and ideologies, the correlation between Perez and Ortega should have been among the lowest in the matrix. In actuality, the correlation of votes for Perez and Ortega (gamma=.74) was larger than between Perez or Ortega and any other judges.

Previous research has demonstrated that without knowing anything else about a candidate, voters tend to assume that women candidates are generally more liberal than male candidates (McDermott, 1997 and 1998). My analysis confirms that voters used gender as a salient cue to a small (but perceptible) degree here. In the 1994 judicial retention contests, the average correlation was gamma=.63 between choices for female candidates and gamma=.66 for choices between male candidates — but slightly lower (gamma=.56) for choices between men and women candidates.

In other words, to the extent that voters organized their retention choices at all, they seem to have utilized what little information *was* available — the gender and ethnicity of the candidate names on the ballot. The lack of campaign-generated information about the substance of the candidates themselves seems to have dampened any more sophisticated voting behavior.

Judicial Retention Votes and Other Preferences

In a previous section of this chapter, I found strong correlations between preferences on the highly-publicized ideological ballot measures and partisan preference in state legislative races. The connection was especially strong in legislative districts which were more highly contested. The common thread was information: the more information, the more of a connection voters made between various preferences. It should follow that connections between judicial retention choices and the ideological ballot measures should be much weaker then connections between highly-publicized partisan office choices and the ideological ballot measures.

To test this hypothesis, I will examine the two most competitive partisan contests: the races for governor and U.S. Senator. In the gubernatorial race, Pete Wilson defeated Kathleen Brown; incumbent U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein narrowly defeated Republican congressman Michael Huffington.[40] Both of these races featured candidates with sharply differing ideologies, and both races received extraordinary amounts of media attention.

I coded each of the two partisan votes as a trichotomy: Democrat (-1), abstain/invalid/minor party (0), and Republican (+1). Similarly, all nineteen of the retention votes were coded as trichotomies: No (-1), abstain/invalid (0), or Yes (+1).

For simplicity's sake, I combined the five highly-publicized ideological ballot measure votes into a single scale, ranging from –1 to +1, gauging each voter's ideology[41]. The average voter scores +.35 on this overall scale, with 23 percent on the liberal side, 72 percent on the conservative side, and 5 percent exactly in the middle. Twenty-two percent made a conservative choice all five times; two percent made five liberal choices.

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[40] In Los Angeles County, Wilson's margin over Brown was 50 percent to 46 percent. Feinstein defeated Huffington 52 percent to 40 percent.

As expected, voters made very strong connections between their preferences in the highly publicized partisan races and the highly publicized ideological ballot measures. As Table 3-7 details, the correlation between ideology and choice for Governor was r=.51; with choice for U.S. Senator, the correlation was also quite strong (r=.46).

There was almost no connection, however, between judicial retention choices and these same ballot measure preferences. The judicial retention votes have been rank-ordered by size of correlation with the ideology measure; none of the correlations even exceeds r=-.16, and only five of the nineteen even reach double digits. As noted above, and as detailed in the appendix, the nineteen judicial candidates evidenced considerable ideological and philosophical diversity — but without information about this diversity, voters were much less able to connect their judicial preferences with their ideological preferences than they were able to connect ideology and partisan office choice.

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[41] Starting with each ballot measure vote coded +1 (conservative), 0 (abstain/invalid), or –1 (liberal), I averaged across all five of the ideological measures (Propositions 181, 184, 185, 186, 187).

Table 3-7

Judicial Retention Choices, Partisan Choices, and Ideology

	Ideology	Governor	U.S. Senator
Governor	.51	1.00	.64
U.S. Senator	.46	.64	1.00
Judicial Retention Candidates:			
Ramona Perez	-.16	-.15	-.15
Reuben Ortega	-.14	-.12	-.12
Joyce Kennard	-.12	-.09	-.14
Norman Epstein	-.11	-.05	-.10
Patti Kitching	-.10	-.06	-.10
Arleigh Woods	-.09	-.05	-.09
Margaret Gringnon	-.09	-.06	-.09
Steven Stone	-.07	-.02	-.06
Kathryn Werdegar	-.07	-.06	-.09
Fred Woods	-.05	.00	-.04
Kenneth Yegan	-.05	.00	-.03
Richard Aldrich	-.05	.00	-.03
Michael Nott	-.04	.01	-.03
Orville Armstrong	-.04	-.01	-.04
Roger Boren	-.04	.01	-.02
J Gary Hastings	-.04	.00	-.03
William Masterson	-.04	.02	-.02
Charles Vogel	-.03	.01	-.03
Ronald George	-.01	.04	.00

Judicial votes coded +1 (retain), -1 (reject), or 0 (abstain, invalid). Partisan votes coded +1 (Republican), -1 (Democrat), or 0 (abstain, invalid, minor party). Ideology is average score across five highly-publicized ideological ballot measures and ranges from -1 (extreme liberal) to +1 (extreme conservative). Correlation coefficient is Pearson's r. Results based on 249,461 ballots cast in 1994 L.A. County general election.

There are two interesting features to the correlations in Table 3-7, however. First of all, the correlation between ideology and every judicial retention choice is *negative*. This indicates that the more conservative the voter, the more likely he is to *reject* any given judge. Liberals are more likely to retain judges. It is possible that this reflects conservative frustration with a perceived “liberal judiciary;” in the absence of evidence to the contrary, conservatives may be slightly more likely to assume that judges are activist liberals; liberals may be slightly more likely to assume that judges are doing what they “ought” to be doing.

Even more interesting, however, are the variations in the sizes of these negative correlations between ideology and retention. Of the nineteen judges, the nine with the strongest negative correlations are all female, Hispanic, and/or Jewish[42]. The ten candidates with the weakest negative correlations with ideology are all men with non-ethnic surnames. It appears that voters with stronger ideological motivations were slightly more aggressive in gleaning ideological cues from the judicial candidate names on the ballot; some voters likely concluded that a candidate with a female, Jewish, or Hispanic name has a higher probability of being a liberal than a candidate whose name does not contain these cues. The more liberal the voter, the more likely he was to support the candidates whose names evoke liberal cues; the more conservative the voter, the more likely he was to reject these same candidates.

Importantly, however, these cues were in many cases misleading: as noted earlier, Reuben Ortega is a Republican and a judicial conservative; many of the women judges were also Republicans. Had voters been more fully informed, they would have been able to differentiate more effectively between Reuben Ortega and (for example) Ramona Perez, who is a liberal Democrat.

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[42] The two Jewish judges are Norman Epstein and Steven Stone. Although the latter is not as obviously Jewish of a name as the former, some may have recognized that “Stone” is an English variant of “Stein,” which is a common Jewish surname.

There were strong connections between those same ballot measures and partisan candidate choices. By contrast, there was almost no connection between judicial retention choices and preferences for the highly-publicized ideological ballot measures. What little relationship there was seems based more on cues evoked by the candidates' names than on any objective and educated understanding of their backgrounds or ideological orientations.

Conclusions

Voting behavior research has tended to focus on the degree to which campaign activity influences election outcomes or pre-election poll standings. This chapter suggests that political scientists redirect their attention to a potentially more important role that campaign activity can play: the building of a more informed electorate, better able to organize ballot choices and connect disparate preferences. When campaign activity is extensive, as it was for a number of high-profile 1994 ballot measures, voters were able to organize their choices into economic and social dimensions — but lumped the lower-profile measures together into a single dimension, regardless of objective content. Voters in competitive state senate and assembly districts were then able to connect their ideological ballot measure preferences with their senate and assembly candidate choices to a greater degree than were their neighbors in less competitive districts. Finally, the data on judicial retention contests are able to cast light on a hypothetical question often posed by voting behavior researchers: what if there was an election, and *neither* campaign took the field? I find that, not surprisingly, voters are utterly unable to organize their choices in this section of the ballot (apart from obvious cues such as gender and surname ethnicity).

The responsible electorate casts votes which are coherent, consistent, and bring various preferences into alignment. This research confirms that when a race generates two-sided campaign activity, voters behave in a more responsible manner. When campaign activity is lacking, or is one-sided, voters seem less capable of connecting their disparate preferences.

This chapter has examined the behavior and consistency of actual voters *on election day.* The next two chapters will take a step back and investigate the degree to which campaign activity *builds consistency over time,* under what circumstances campaigns are most efficacious in doing so, and how the process differs in subpresidential and presidential elections.

CHAPTER 4

DRIVING THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE:

ALL PARTY ALL THE TIME?

As the opening chapters of this dissertation detailed, considerable research has suggested that presidential campaigns do little more than activate existing voter predispositions such as partisanship. While this may be true of presidential races, campaigns in statewide subpresidential elections have a greater potential for shaping voter perceptions of candidates in a manner independent of partisanship. Candidates do not begin the cycle as universally known, the partisan cognitive implications of defection are not as high, and the potential for "learning" is greater. The previous chapter demonstrated that varying levels of subpresidential campaign activity in fact do produce varying degrees of voter consistency on election day. These next two chapters trace the development of voter consistency over time, specifically the degree to which campaign activity builds voter impressions of candidates and the manner in which those impressions are then connected to the vote. The current chapter will focus on the effects of presidential campaigns. The next chapter will explore the degree to which subpresidential campaigns produce effects resembling those produced at the top of the ticket, and to what degree (and in what manner) subpresidential campaigns are unique.

The central attitudes of interest in both chapters are overall awareness and impressions (favorable or unfavorable) of the two competing candidates, party identification, the current vote intention, and the way relationships between all these attitudes change over time.

Together, the following two chapters have two distinct aims. First, each will provide evidence of the degree to which campaigns *activate partisan predispositions* over time, and the nature in which they do so. The use of state level time series data, from across each of several election cycles in several states, will shed light on the time frame and manner in which this activation occurs. These data will flesh out details of over-time activation which are difficult to discern in simple “before/after” studies such as the NES. I hypothesize that campaigns activate partisan identity in two distinct, but related, manners: direct and indirect. Direct activation means voters increasingly connect party preference with candidate preference; in other words, increased party loyalty in voting. Indirect activation means that partisanship is increasingly used by voters as a schema for evaluating and shaping their impressions of the competing candidates; those “informed perceptions” are in turn increasingly connected to the vote. The most important finding of Chapter 4 is confirmation that party identification dominates the presidential vote choice, both directly and indirectly, from early in the election cycle until election day.

Secondly, Chapter 5 will go on to examine the degree to which subpresidential campaigns do more than simply activate partisan predispositions. Given that candidates are generally less well-known and resources generally less well-matched than in presidential contests, such campaigns may produce “extra-activation” effects which presidential-level research has been unable to detect. I find that, in fact, statewide campaigns often do produce effects beyond simple activation of predispositions. At the subpresidential level, successful campaigns construct winning coalitions by assembling a partisan base — but then expanding that base and shaping candidate perceptions which are increasingly independent of raw partisanship. Rather than “reverting” to partisanship in the face of low information, state electorates can be shaped by campaigns to form perceptions of candidates which are increasingly connected to the vote *independently* of partisanship. Broadly speaking, I will demonstrate that modern subpresidential campaigns, in addition to activating partisan predispositions, attempt to shape perceptions of candidates and then lead voters to use these “informed perceptions” in voting decisions (independently of party).

Data and Methodology

Chapters 4 and 5 use somewhat different data sets, but the underlying methodology and style of inquiry are so similar for both chapters, I will discuss all of the data and methodology for both chapters here. These two chapters draw upon cross sectional, statewide sample survey data commissioned by a number of state and federal campaigns. All of the original research design and fieldwork were conducted by Market Strategies, Inc., on behalf of individual campaigns and Republican party committees, as described in the opening chapter.

The presidential data for 2000 include many thousands of statewide interviews in Missouri (N=10,408), Wisconsin (N=6,450), Illinois (N=4,706), New Mexico (N=3,953), Oregon (N=1,452), Maine (N=1,452), Tennessee (N=2,000), and Iowa (N=2,250). This is not intended to be a representative sample of all states — but they nonetheless form a diverse and interesting collection. Most importantly, all of these states were highly contested and featured substantial campaign activity, which make them an ideal place to look for campaign effects. With the exception of Illinois, the outcome in all of these states was extremely close. I also have an additional 3,950 Missouri interviews from the 1992 Presidential race, and 3,302 Michigan interviews from the 1996 Presidential contest. With a few exceptions, which will be made clear in the individual analysis tables, all of the Presidential interviews were conducted from late summer through election day.

The subpresidential data, to be analyzed in the next chapter, are considerably more varied from state to state and race to race in the number of interviews and length of campaign time covered by the surveys. In some races, the first interviews were conducted more than a year before election day; in other races, the interviews did not begin until Labor Day or beyond. Regardless, every available survey was compiled for each race. Table 4-1 summarizes the states, races, years, and number of interviews to be analyzed in each state. All together, there are more than 68,000 interviews conducted across sixteen races, seven states, and five election cycles. While these states do not necessarily form a representative sample of the country, they remain a useful collection nonetheless. Some are quite small; some are quite large. Some have homogeneous populations; others include substantial demographic diversity. They are drawn from throughout the country. Most importantly, all tend to be "swing states," where both Republicans and Democrats have managed to win statewide office in the last ten years; in none of these states is a single party dominant to the exclusion of the other. Furthermore, the races themselves featured a variety of candidate types, offices, and election outcomes: Senators, Governors, and Attorneys General;

Table 4-1: Summary of Subpresidential Race Surveys Used

State	Race(s)	Year	N of interviews
IL	Governor	1990	3,679
IN	U.S. Senator	1990	4,158
SD	Governor	1990	1,500
VT	Governor	1990	1,005
PA	U.S. Senator	1991	5,713
MO	U.S. Senator	1992	5,350
IL	Governor, Atty Gen	1994	8,579
MO	U.S. Senator	1994	5,654
IL	Governor, U.S. Senator, Atty Gen	1998	9,300
MO	U.S. Senator	1998	8,290
NV	Governor, U.S. Senator	1998	4,753
MO	U.S. Senator	2000	11,008

some strong incumbents, some open seats; some Republican winners, some Democratic winners; a few blowouts, a few extremely close “squeakers,” and a number of modest victory margins.

Unfortunately, to save valuable campaign resources, the number and scope of questions asked in campaign-sponsored polls are often limited and not consistent over time. A campaign poll’s focus is generating useful strategic information, not settling academic controversies about campaign effects. That said, the mix of questions available in particular polls does give some insight into what the campaign perceives to be important and worthy of further understanding. I would have preferred to have had available questions about incumbent job performance, which form the heart of the retrospective voting model. In almost no races, however, were such questions asked after the middle portion of the campaign. In all races there are a handful of key variables which were consistently asked in nearly every survey, and will form the heart of my investigation: party identification, trial heat vote, and favorable/unfavorable impressions of the two candidates in question. While not the exhaustive set of measures an academic researcher might prefer, these are the key variables on which the campaigns themselves focused their attention. Although the candidate favorable/unfavorable ratings do not capture retrospective job performance evaluations *per se*, they do serve as a summary measure of the global impact of campaign activity on overall feelings about the competing principals. (I will explore the "global" nature of these ratings in more detail in one of the analysis sections.) As such, they are a useful gauge of how campaigns shape perceptions of candidates and how these perceptions then influence voting.

In all cases, I have coded these variables to range from pro-Democrat to pro-Republican[43]. Party identification is the standard seven-point scale, built using the typical three NES questions to determine intensity, ranging from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican. Vote choice is always coded as a trichotomy: Democrat-Undecided/other-Republican.

The candidate favorability index is a nine-point scale ranging from polarized pro-Democrat to polarized pro-Republican. It is built from the two candidates' overall favorability ratings,[44] themselves coded: very unfavorable (-2), somewhat unfavorable (-1) no opinion (0), somewhat favorable (+1), very favorable (+2). The overall nine-point index ranges from –4 to +4, and is computed by subtracting the Democrat's rating from the Republican's rating. For instance, a person with a very favorable impression of the Democrat and a somewhat favorable impression of the Republican would score –1. A person giving both candidates identical ratings would fall in the exact center of the scale (0), as would those with no feelings about either candidate.[45]

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[43] The direction is arbitrary, but it makes sense to code each variable as a continuum running from left to right. It is therefore natural to put pro-Democratic attitudes consistently at the far left (smaller numbers) and pro-Republican attitudes consistently at the far right (larger numbers).

[44] "I am going to read a list of people whose names have been in the news. For each one, please tell me if you are aware of not aware of that person. (If aware, ask:) Is your general impression of that person favorable or unfavorable? (If favorable/unfavorable, ask:) Would that be very favorable/unfavorable or just somewhat favorable/unfavorable?"

The ensuing examination attempts to answer five questions, all of which will be compared to subpresidential races in the next chapter: (1) the pattern of opinion formation and polarization over time; (2) the degree to which impressions of presidential candidates are rooted in underlying beliefs about those candidates' personal qualities and relative abilities to handle issues; (3) the degree to which presidential campaigns increase or decrease party loyalty in voting; (4) the degree to which campaigns activate or suppress partisan identity as a component of candidate impressions; and (5) the degree to which candidate impressions are connected to the vote independently of partisan identity. The ensuing analysis sections will describe in detail how I propose to investigate these questions. Each of the first two questions will be examined in its own analysis section; a third, larger, analysis will examine questions 3, 4 and 5 together. Finally, the next chapter will explore the degree to which subpresidential campaigns produce similar effects, and to what extent subpresidential campaigns are unique.

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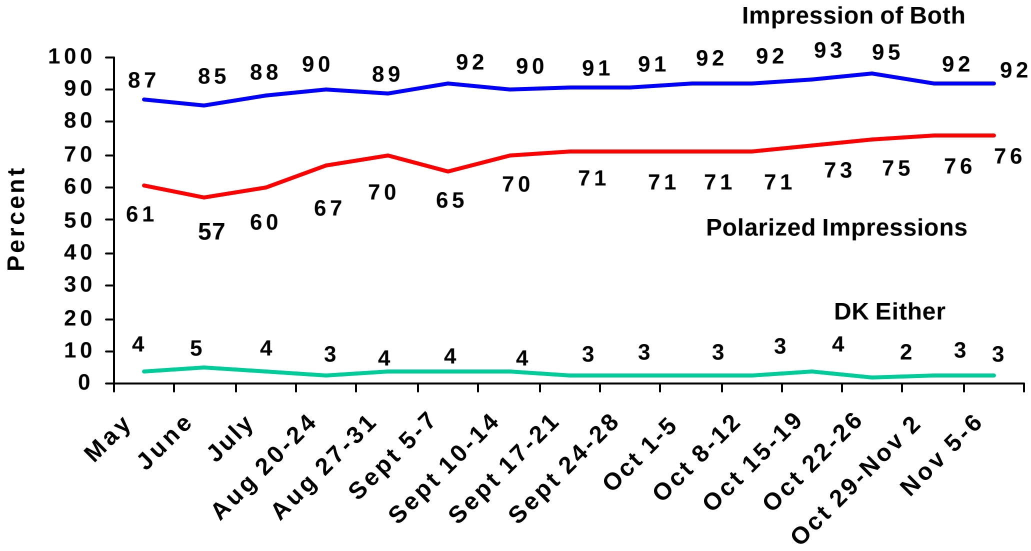
[45] The questionnaire always asked candidate impressions very early in the interview, always randomized the candidate names, and did not supply party affiliation, job titles, or other cues along with the names. The trial heat vote choice was always asked very soon after the candidate impression questions. In the trial heat, candidate names were always randomized and party affiliations always attached to the names.

Opinion Formation

The first question is the degree to which simple exposure to campaign activity, over time, leads voters to form impressions of candidates. Over time, campaigns ought to lead increasing numbers of voters to have an impression of both candidates; likewise, over time, there should be a declining percentage of the electorate which is able to form an opinion of *neither* candidate. The more interesting question is the degree to which campaign activity leads voters to form *polarized* impressions of the two candidates (favorable toward one but unfavorable toward the other).

In Presidential campaigns, the learning process appears to begin far before the formal general election campaigns even get started — and opinions grow sharply divided. Figure 4-1 shows that in Missouri, the state for which the most extensive Presidential data are available for 2000, 87 percent already had impressions of both Bush and Gore by May, and 61 percent held polarized opinions of the two. By election eve, the percent with polarized impressions had increased somewhat (to 76 percent), with as much of this increase coming over the summer as in October. Only a very few were unable to form opinions of both Bush and Gore.

Figure 4-1
Opinion Formation of 2000 Presidential Candidates (Missouri)



Source: Polls conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. on behalf of the Bush campaign and other clients.

The Basis of Candidate Impressions

As described above, the overall candidate impression measure is a nine-point scale combining the favorable and unfavorable opinions of the two candidates. This chapter proposes to treat that nine-point impression scale as a summary measure of voters' substantive evaluations of the relative personal and professional merits of the two competing candidates. But is it accurate to ascribe such meaning to this scale? Substantively, it is possible that this measure only captures voters' impressions of the candidates' personal qualities. Or, it is possible that the scale only captures perceptions of which candidates can best handle public policy issues. And it is an open question as to whether these perceptions of personal qualities and relative ability to handle issues have any independent impact on overall favorability above and beyond party identification; it is possible that the candidate favorability measure is little more than a proxy for partisanship.

If it is the case that the overall favorability measure indeed captures a rich mix of perceived issue handling ability and personal qualities, and that these underlying perceptions influence favorability above and beyond party identification, we could have more confidence in using that overall favorability measure as a barometer or summary measure of voters' substantive evaluations of the merits of the two candidates.

In the early summer of 2000, Market Strategies conducted two large presidential election studies with data relevant to this question. Each included n=1000 interviews with registered voters, with samples drawn from a large number of states[46] considered to be the battleground territories. The surveys measured the perceived fit of personal characteristics with George W. Bush or Al Gore and the ability of Bush or Gore to handle certain public policy issues. Each battery included a brief introduction telling respondents they would be hearing a list of personal descriptions, and for each one they should report which candidate the description best fit. They were also given a list of public policy issues, and asked which candidate could best handle each issue. Each item was coded as a trichotomy: Gore best (-1), Neutral (0), and Bush best (+1).

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[46] Interviews were conducted in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin. Number of interviews in each state is proportional to that state's voting age population share of the total 1000 interviews.

I combined all of the issue handling measures into a single summary index, by averaging across each of each respondent's scores on that battery. The same kind of summary index was also built for the personal description items. By correlating responses to these personal quality and issue handling measures with the overall candidate impressions, it is possible to determine the substance underlying those candidate impressions.

Table 4-2 shows that the personal quality items together had a zero-order correlation of r=.58 with the overall combined candidate impressions, and the issue handling perceptions were almost as strongly correlated with the candidate impressions (r=.57). When the influence of party identification was partialled out, the personal qualities maintained a correlation of r=.43, and the issue handling index was r=.40. Among the individual personal qualities, "is ready to handle the job of President" had the strongest partial correlation with overall candidate impressions (partial r=.56), but "shares your values" (r=.54) and "truthful" (r=.53) were not far behind. Among issue handling items, moral values (partial r=.50), Social Security (r=.46), economy (r=.45), and education (r=.45) were the strongest correlates of overall candidate impressions.

It appears, therefore, that the overall candidate impression measure is a reasonable global summary of voters' impressions of both the candidates' personal qualities *and* abilities to handle policy issues — but that party identification is also a sizable component. The zero-order correlation between party identification and the overall favorability measure is r=.64. Party identification has a correlation of r=.46 with the personal qualities and r=.48 with the issue handling abilities. Alone, party identification explains 40 percent of the variance in overall candidate impressions. Adding the issue handling and personal quality measures to the model boosts the explained variance only modestly, to 52 percent.

Table 4-2: Presidential Multistate Studies 2000

Issue Handling and Personal Description Association with Overall Candidate Impressions (R-sq=.52)

	Correlation with Impressions	
	Zero-order	**Partial (Party)**
Issue Handling Measures		
All items combined	**.57**	**.40**
Moral Values	.67	.50
Social Security	.66	.46
Economy	.65	.45
Education	.63	.45
Taxes	.61	.39
Personal Descriptions		
All items combined	**.58**	**.43**
Is ready to handle the job of President	.72	.56
Shares your values	.73	.54
Truthful	.69	.53
Cares about people's problems	.66	.49
Strong Leader	.66	.49
Likeable	.65	.48
Has new ideas	.51	.35

Based on 2000 interviews conducted June 4-7 (N=1000), and July 17-19 (N=1000). Overall candidate impression measure is combined nine-point scale ranging from polarized pro-Gore to polarized pro-Bush. Issue handling and personal description items coded -1 (Gore can best handle or best describes Gore), 0 (neither/both equally), +1 (Bush can best handle or best describes Bush). "All items combined" is an average across scores given on all items, ranging from -1 (Gore best on all) to +1 (Bush best on all). R-sq is amount of variance in candidate impressions explained by both combined measures and seven-point party id scale. All correlations significant at p<.001.

Results: Presidential Races

Much of the "minimal effects" research suggests that Presidential campaigns primarily activate existing attitudes such as party identification. According to this research, as the election season progresses, party identification becomes increasingly tied to the vote decision both directly and indirectly. The direct effect should be visible through increasingly large correlations between party identification and the vote. The indirect effect should take the form of increasingly large correlations between party identification and other perceptions of the candidates, such as personal favorability or job performance, which are in turn tied to the vote. Practically speaking, by election day, party identification should account for an enormous share of the variance in presidential voting. Impressions of the candidates should also be driven to a large degree by party identification. Fairly little variance in either the vote or in candidate impressions should be left unexplained by party identification. Furthermore, the independent relationship between candidate impressions and the vote (controlling for party identification) should be substantially smaller than the direct relationship between party identification and the vote.

Direct Activation of Party

Table 4-3 traces the zero-order (Pearson's r) correlation between party identification and the 2000 Presidential vote in the eight states for which I have data. Missouri interviews were conducted from May through election day; in the other states, interviews were conducted between the end of August and the beginning of November. In six of the eight states, by the end of the campaign the correlation was at least r=.74; in the other two states, the correlation was also quite large (r=.65 and r=.67). In Missouri, where the interviews began earliest in the year, there is a noticeable increase in the size of this correlation over time: from r=.70 in the spring, to .80 the night before the election. In Missouri, therefore, there seems to have been some direct activation of party identification over time. In the other states, where the interviews date only to late August (and in Missouri from late August onward, for that matter), the size of the correlations remained largely flat over time. There may well have been campaign-driven activation of partisanship in these other states as well, but it seems to have occurred before the traditional Labor Day “official” kick-off of the campaigns. This suggests that the typical post Labor Day time frame we examine for Presidential campaign effects may be too narrow. It appears that a great deal of partisan activation occurs before this “official” campaign start. As the Missouri studies suggest, there is even considerable activation that occurs before May. In that state in 2000, party identification was already highly correlated with Presidential vote choice in the spring.

Table 4-3

President 2000: Party Identification with Vote (Pearson's r)

	MO	WI	IL	NM	OR	ME	TN	IA
May	.70							
June	.72							
July	.72							
Aug 20-24	.75							
Aug 27-31	.78	.72	.69	.69				
Sept 5-7	.70	.74		.70	.72	.64		
Sept 10-14	.77	.70	.71	.70				.72
Sept 17-21	.71		.74			.63		
Sept 24-28	.73	.74		.67				.69
Oct 1-5	.73	.75	.71				.79	
Oct 8-12	.74	.71		.71	.71			.74
Oct 15-19	.73	.77	.76				.75	
Oct 22-26	.75	.70	.75	.67	.75	.67	.76	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.73	.75	.75	.65			.74	.76
Nov 5-6	.80							

Indirect Activation of Party

The 2000 Presidential campaigns also seem to have activated partisanship in an indirect manner. Table 4-4 shows that the correlation between party identification and candidate impressions increased substantially in Missouri between spring (r=.69) and election day (r=.78), indicating that partisanship was increasingly relevant to voter impressions of the candidates as the campaigns progressed. In the other states, with a shorter window of interviewing, the trends over time were more mixed; party became more relevant for candidate impressions in Illinois, Maine and Iowa, stayed flat in Wisconsin, New Mexico and Oregon, and became slightly less relevant in Tennessee. However, in all states there was a very strong correlation between partisanship and candidate impressions by election eve. The size of the ultimate Pearson's r ranged from a low of r=.67 in New Mexico to a high of .78 in Missouri. Again, in nearly all of these states, most of the

Table 4-4
President 2000: Party ID with Candidate Impressions (Pearson's r)

	MO	WI	IL	NM	OR	ME	TN	IA
May	.69							
June	.72							
July	.70							
Aug 20-24	.72							
Aug 27-31	.77	.73	.69	.70				
Sept 5-7	.71	.73		.70	.74	.61		
Sept 10-14	.74	.71	.70	.70				.71
Sept 17-21	.71		.70			.67		
Sept 24-28	.72	.73		.68				.70
Oct 1-5	.73	.75	.73				.78	
Oct 8-12	.76	.74		.71	.73			.74
Oct 15-19	.72	.75	.75				.76	
Oct 22-26	.77	.73	.77	.67	.73		.78	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.75	.75	.76	.67		.68	.73	.76
Nov 5-6	.78							

activation of party as a driver of candidate impressions seems to have occurred well before Labor Day. The Missouri studies again suggest that considerable activation occurs even before the spring.

Activating Candidate Impressions

Although party identification is strongly connected with candidate impressions, and appears to grow more closely connected over time, impressions of the candidates do exert some independent influence over the vote decision. This independent influence can be determined by calculating a *partial* correlation between candidate impressions and the vote, controlling for party identification. These partial correlations can then be compared to the correlations in Table 4-4 to determine the relative independent strength of party identification and candidate impressions in driving the vote.[47]

Table 4-5 shows that the strength of these partial correlations tended to increase over time in the states examined. As always, the largest increase was in Missouri — from r=.59 in the spring to r=.77 the last full week before the election (with some backing off in the small N=400 sample conducted in the last two days of the election). Looking across all states, the partial correlations tended to end up in the upper .60s to low .70s. Importantly, in nearly every state, immediately before the election, partisanship exercised a somewhat stronger independent influence over the vote than did impressions of candidates. The spread was largest in Missouri, Wisconsin, and Oregon; the gap was somewhat smaller in Illinois, Tennessee, and Iowa. In only two states, New Mexico and Maine, did candidate impressions prove more important independent vote drivers than party.

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[47] This assumes that candidate impressions do not exert any influence over party identification. It is conceivable that some survey respondents identified themselves as Democrats or Republicans because of their feelings about the Presidential candidates, but a long political science literature suggests that the influence flows overwhelmingly in the opposite direction. Sorting out the degree to which candidate evaluations influence party identification is beyond the scope of this paper, and is a task for someone with access to panel data.

Table 4-5
President 2000: Impact of Candidate Impressions on Vote, Partialling out Party Identification

	MO	WI	IL	NM	OR	ME	TN	IA
May	.59							
June	.56							
July	.63							
Aug 20-24	.65							
Aug 27-31	.66	.61	.67	.66				
Sept 5-7	.65	.59		.66	.63	.69		
Sept 10-14	.65	.63	.65	.68				.61
Sept 17-21	.71		.58			.70		
Sept 24-28	.73	.60		.73				.64
Oct 1-5	.70	.56	.67				.59	
Oct 8-12	.67	.68		.67	.70			.62
Oct 15-19	.70	.65	.62				.68	
Oct 22-26	.72	.68	.70	.74	.65		.65	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.77	.65	.72	.74		.71	.70	.71
Nov 5-6	.69							

Explaining the Vote

Finally, putting party identification and candidate impressions together in a regression equation predicting vote choice, Table 4-6 tracks the changing amount of explained variance in the vote (R-squared of the model). Importantly, the R-sq. increased in every state examined; this increase was often sizable, and finished at an enormous .75 or greater in nearly every state. In other words, three-fourths or more of the vote can be explained by party identification and candidate impressions. Once these two factors are taken into account, fairly little of the vote choice is left unexplained.

The Missouri data from 1992 and the Michigan data from 1996 provide some additional confirmation of these patterns seen in 2000. It should be cautioned that these races are somewhat difficult to compare to 2000, because of the prominent role played by Ross Perot. This makes the coding of the variables, especially the vote, more problematic: Perot voters had to be lumped into a large middle category with the undecided voters. With a strong third-party candidate in the race, any such correlations between impressions of the major party candidates, party identification, and the vote are bound to be somewhat weaker than in a strictly two-party race.

Table 4-6
President 2000: R-Sq of Party Identification and Candidate Impressions Predicting Vote

	MO	WI	IL	NM	OR	ME	TN	IA
May	.67							
June	.67							
July	.71							
Aug 20-24	.75							
Aug 27-31	.78	.70	.71	.70				
Sept 5-7	.71	.70		.71	.71	.69		
Sept 10-14	.77	.69	.71	.72				.70
Sept 17-21	.75		.70			.69		
Sept 24-28	.79	.72		.74				.69
Oct 1-5	.76	.70	.72				.75	
Oct 8-12	.75	.73		.73	.75			.73
Oct 15-19	.76	.76	.74				.76	
Oct 22-26	.79	.73	.78	.75	.75		.76	
Oct 29-Nov 2	.81	.75	.79	.74		.72	.77	.79
Nov 5-6	.81							

Table 4-7 shows that in Missouri (1992), party identification increased somewhat in strength as a direct vote driver between June and election day. However, Perot's presence in the race seems to have suppressed the absolute strength of party identification to r=.69, which is lower than the r=.78 in Missouri eight years later. Interestingly, r=.70 was the *starting point* in May for party identification in Missouri in 2000. The indirect influence of party identification, as a shaper of candidate perceptions, remained fairly flat between August and November, 1992 and did not reach as high a peak as in 2000. The independent strength of candidate impressions as a vote driver held steady in Missouri between August 1992 and election day, but were

Table 4-7
Missouri U.S. President 1992

		Correlations			
Date	**Model R-sq**	**Party ID with Vote**	**Impressions with Vote: Partial**	**Party with Impressions**	**N of cases**
June 92		.61			
Aug 92	.72	.65	.71	.67	600
Sept 92	.77	.73	.72	.71	800
Oct 11-15	.72	.66	.71	.68	900
Oct 18-22	.74	.67	.73	.68	750
Oct 24-29	.73	.69	.69	.70	900

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

interestingly slightly *more* important than partisanship much of the time. On election eve, the two factors finished with equal importance.

Perot's influence was more muted in 1996 Michigan than in 1992 Missouri, with 1996 Michigan showing a pattern more similar to most 2000 states. While the importance of party identification as a direct vote driver declined slightly between Labor Day 1996 and the election, and the independent influence of candidate impressions increased slightly in the same time period, the election day importance of party identification (r=.69) was substantially stronger than the independent importance of candidate impressions (r=.57). Also, as was true in 2000, party maintained an extremely strong relationship with the candidate impressions themselves.

In Presidential contests, it appears that the minimal effects school may be

Table 4-8
Michigan U.S. President 1996

		Correlations			
Date	**Model R-sq**	**Party ID with Vote**	**Impressions with Vote: Partial**	**Party with Impressions**	**N of cases**
Sept 4-7, 1996	.67	.73	.53	.78	802
Oct 13-17	.63	.70	.53	.75	900
Oct 19-24	.70	.74	.58	.78	800
Oct 26-31	.65	.69	.57	.74	800

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

fairly accurate in describing campaign effects as largely due to “activation” of pre-existing attitudes such as party identification. Party identification tends to grow highly correlated with both the vote and with candidate impressions. Furthermore, when the party identification component of candidate impressions is controlled for, partisanship *per se* tends to be a stronger independent driver of the vote than are candidate impressions.

CHAPTER 5

SHAPING SUBPRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IMPRESSIONS

The previous chapter explored opinion formation and voting in Presidential contests, and confirmed much of the political science literature concerning the importance of party identification and stability of voting over time. The current chapter examines the degree to which these findings about Presidential campaign effects can be applied to subpresidential races — and the degree to which subpresidential campaigns are unique in the mix of effects they produce. It is possible that because statewide contests tend to feature lower profile candidates and less overall campaign activity than at the Presidential level, partisan activation could be extremely important for downballot races. In the face of relatively low information, voters may "revert" to partisanship in both forming opinions of the candidates and in making a vote choice. However, it is also quite possible that because the contest is closer to home, and the choice is not so tightly wrapped up in the meaning of party identification, there is more openness to "learning" about the individual candidates, forming impressions of them based less on partisanship alone, and making vote decisions that are less closely tied to one's partisan predispositions.

Specifically, the ensuing examination attempts to answer five questions, all of which will be compared to the previous chapter's findings concerning presidential races: (1) the pattern of opinion formation and polarization over time; (2) the degree to which impressions of subpresidential candidates are rooted in underlying beliefs about those candidates' personal qualities and relative abilities to handle issues; (3) the degree to which, and the circumstances under which, subpresidential campaigns increase or decrease party loyalty in voting; (4) the degree to which campaigns activate or suppress partisan identity as a component of candidate impressions; and (5) the degree to which candidate impressions are connected to the vote independently of partisan identity.

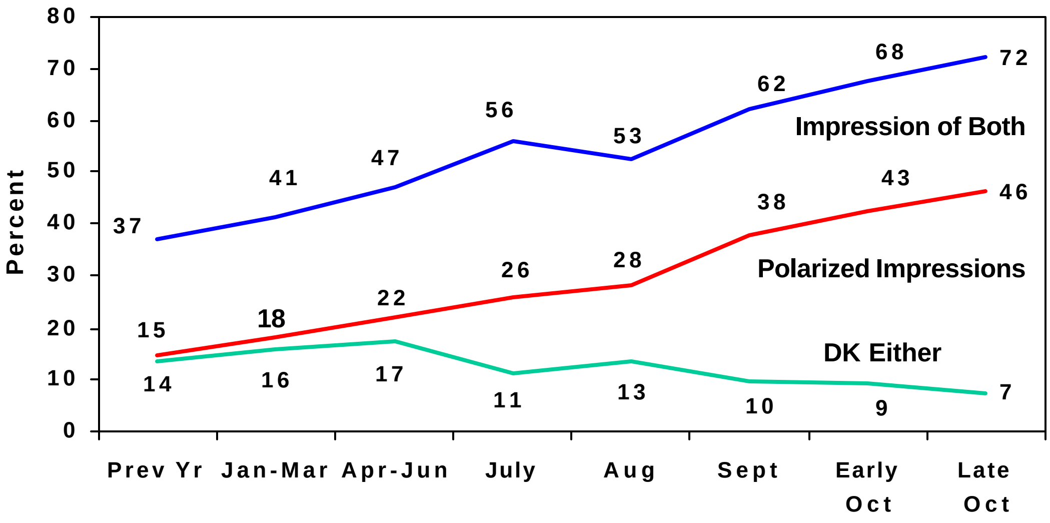
The analytical approach will be the same as in the previous chapter, facilitating comparisons with presidential voting behavior. In exploring questions 3-5, the analysis will group the sixteen subpresidential races by types of effects observed. Within each type, individual races will be described in detail. At the end, I will generalize from the sixteen cases, providing a summary of the varying campaign circumstances which produce each kind of pattern or effect.

Opinion Formation

The first question is the degree to which simple exposure to campaign activity, over time, leads voters to form impressions of candidates. Over time, campaigns ought to lead increasing numbers of voters to have an impression of both candidates; likewise, over time, there should be a declining percentage of the electorate which is able to form an opinion of *neither* candidate. The more interesting question is the degree to which campaign activity leads voters to form *polarized* impressions of the two candidates (favorable toward one but unfavorable toward the other).

As Figure 5-1 demonstrates, in subpresidential election contests, the percentage of the electorate able to form an impression of both candidates increases fairly steadily over time; the proportion roughly doubles over the course of the year preceding election day. Over the same time frame, the proportion familiar with neither candidate is reduced by about half. Interestingly, the proportion with *polarized* opinions of the two candidates more than triples (from 15 percent to 46 percent) between the previous year

Figure 5-1
Opinion Formation of Subpresidential Candidates



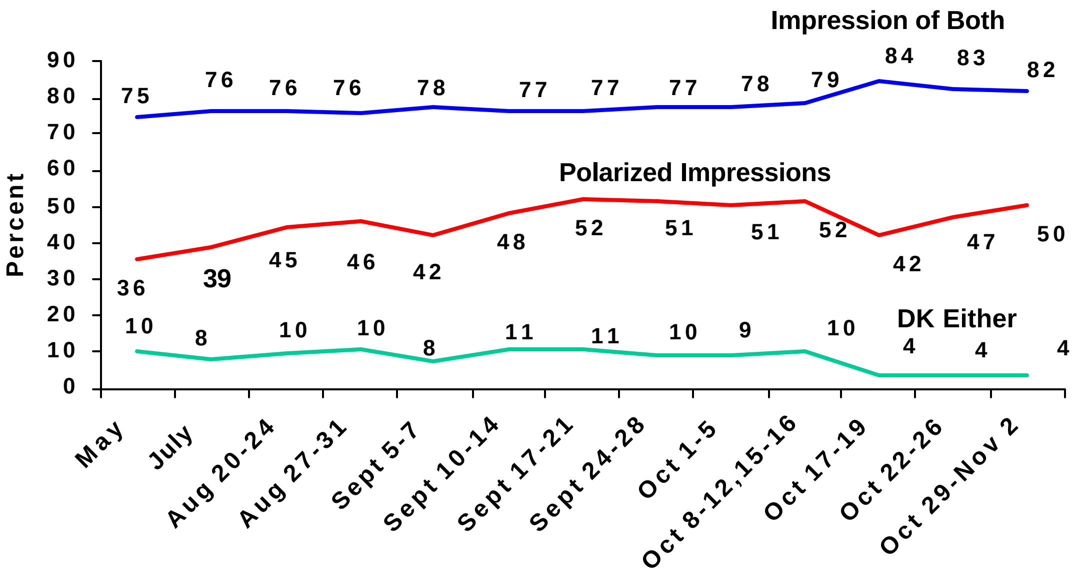
Source: averages of polls conducted over the course of 15 subpresidential election races between 1990 and 2000. Pennsylvania 1991 special election excluded because of interviewing time frame. All polls conducted by Market Strategies, Inc.

and election day. Put another way, before the campaign has begun in earnest, many people either don't recognize at least one candidate or have roughly equal feelings about the two. By the time the campaigns have spent themselves, a relatively large number have come to identify the competing candidates — and to view them as different from one another.

Importantly, however, the percents with impressions of the typical two subpresidential candidates and polarized opinions of the two sides remain substantially lower than in Presidential races. In the previous chapter, between May 2000 and election eve, the number of Missouri voters with an impression of both Bush and Gore increased from 87 percent to 92 percent, and the share with polarized impressions climbed from 61 percent to 76 percent.

Incidentally, of all the subpresidential races for which I have data, the one most closely resembling a presidential contest was also waged in Missouri in 2000. That race featured an incumbent Senator (Republican John Ashcroft) challenged by an incumbent Governor (Democrat Mel Carnahan). Even in that extremely high visibility contest, which featured two high-spending, ideologically polarized candidates, the proportion with an impression of both candidates increased from 75 percent in May to 82 percent on election eve. Over the same time period, the proportion with polarized impressions climbed from 36 percent to 50 percent. Although both of these finishing percentages are well above the average for all subpresidential races examined (Figure 5-1), they remain substantially lower than the closing percentages in the Presidential race in that same state in that same year.[48]

Figure 5-2
Opinion Formation of 2000 Missouri U.S. Senate Candidates



Source: Polls conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. on behalf of the Ashcroft campaign and other clients.

At the risk of stating the obvious, Presidential campaigns are very high intensity affairs and generate an enormous amount of publicity for a long period preceding the election. Public opinion becomes much more highly polarized, much more quickly, than in subpresidential contests. However, given the generally greater amount of “learning” which is able to take place at the subpresidential level, this makes state elections all the more interesting places to look for campaign effects.

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[48] This race had one of the more bizarre endings in history, with Carnahan dying in a plane crash the night of October 16th. In the immediate aftermath of this tragedy, the percent reporting favorable impressions of the now-deceased Governor spiked upwards, which accounts for the mid-October increase in percent holding an impression of both candidates and the corresponding decrease in percent polarized. Interestingly, however, once the immediate shock faded, the number reporting polarized impressions returned to roughly where it had been before the tragedy. The details of this race will be discussed later in the chapter.

Basis of Evaluations

The previous chapter found that perceived fit of personal qualities and perceived ability to handle issues were both important drivers of overall favorability of the two candidates in the 2000 Presidential race. In addition, party identification was also an important component of perceived ability to handle issues, perceived fit of personal qualities, and overall candidate favorability. Do overall candidate impressions in subpresidential races have the same basis as was found for impressions of Bush and Gore in 2000?

Two of the 1998 races, Missouri U.S. Senate and Illinois Governor, included a large number of interviews with batteries of questions measuring the perceived fit of personal characteristics and ability to handle issues. The questions were asked and coded in the same form as was described in the previous chapter. In addition, for both 1998 races, overall measures of perceived issue handling and perceived personal quality fit were built in the same way as for the 2000 presidential race (described in the previous chapter).

Table 5-1 shows that the personal quality items together had a zero-order correlation of r=.54 with the overall 1998 Missouri U.S. Senate candidate impressions, and the issue handling perceptions were almost as strongly correlated with the candidate impressions (r=.51). When the influence of party identification was partialled out, the personal qualities still maintained a correlation of r=.46, and the issue handling index was still r=.43. Among the individual personal qualities, "shares your values on most issues" had the strongest partial correlation with overall candidate impressions (r=.40), but "has experience you trust" (r=.39) and "understands problems facing Missouri" (r=.38) were not far behind. Among issue handling items, education (partial r=.36), crime/drugs (r=.32), and patient rights (r=.33) were the strongest correlates of overall candidate impressions.

Party identification alone explains only 12 percent of the variance in overall candidate favorability. Together, the issue handling and personal quality measures boost the explained variance to 32 percent — a substantially larger boost than in the presidential race. Party identification exerts a somewhat weaker influence over both perceived issue handling ability (r=.40), perceived fit of personal qualities (r=.42), and the overall candidate favorability measure itself (r=.35) than was true in 2000 for Bush and Gore at the same point in the election cycle.

Table 5-1: Missouri U.S. Senate 1998
Issue Handling and Personal Description Association with Overall Candidate Impressions (R-sq=.32)

	Correlation with Impressions Zero-order	 Partial (Party)
Issue Handling Measures		
All items combined	**.51**	**.43**
Improving education	.43	.36
Combating crime and drugs	.41	.33
Protecting patient rights in health care plans	.39	.33
Getting drugs and gangs out of the schools	.40	.32
Protecting the environment	.34	.29
Simplifying the IRS tax code and cutting taxes	.34	.25
Personal Descriptions		
All items combined	**.54**	**.46**
Shares your values on most issues	.49	.40
Has experience you trust	.47	.39
Understands problems facing Missouri	.46	.38
Fights for Missouri familes	.44	.37
Hard working	.43	.36
Has new ideas to solve people's problems	.38	.31

Based on 1610 statewide interviews conducted June 17-22 (N=809), and August 25-30 (N=801). Overall candidate impression measure is combined nine-point scale ranging from polarized pro-Nixon to polarized pro-Bond. Issue handling and personal description items coded -1 (Nixon can best handle or best describes Nixon), 0 (neither/both equally), +1 (Bond can best handle or best describes Bond). "All items combined" is an average across scores given on all items, ranging from -1 (Nixon best on all) to +1 (Bond best on all). R-sq is amount of variance in candidate impressions explained by both combined measures and seven-point party id scale. All correlations significant at p<.001.

In Illinois that year, much the same was true. As Table 5-2 illustrates, the issue handling items had a zero-order correlation of r=.58 with overall candidate impressions, and the personal qualities had a correlation of r=.59. Partialling out party identification drops these correlations only slightly, to r=.55 and r=.56, respectively. Again, “shares your values,” “understands problems” facing the state, and perceived ability to handle crime/drugs were among the strongest individual correlates with overall candidate impressions.

The Illinois data show an even weaker role for party identification than was true in Missouri that same year. By itself, party identification explains only five percent of the variance in overall candidate favorability. Adding the issue handling and personal quality measures boosts the explained variance to 38 percent — again, much larger than the boost in the presidential race. Furthermore, as was true in Missouri, party identification exerts a weaker influence over both perceived issue handling ability (r=.36), perceived fit of personal qualities (r=.39), and the overall candidate favorability measure itself (r=.31) than was true in 2000 for Bush and Gore at the same point in the election cycle.

Table 5-2: Illinois Governor 1998

Issue Handling and Personal Description Association with Overall Candidate Impressions (R-sq=.38)

	Correlation with Impressions	
	Zero-order	**Partial (Party)**
Issue Handling Measures		
All items combined	**.58**	**.55**
Combating crime and drugs	.50	.46
Protecting patient rights in health care plans	.46	.42
Protecting the state's air and water from pollution	.43	.39
Controlling guns	.35	.32
Personal Descriptions		
All items combined	**.59**	**.56**
Shares your values on most issues	.55	.51
Understands problems facing Illinois	.51	.47
One of us	.47	.43

Based on 2600 statewide interviews conducted July 7-10 (N=800), July 24-26 (N=500), Aug 7-9 (N=500), and Aug 27-30 (N=800). Overall candidate impression measure is combined nine-point scale ranging from polarized pro-Poshard to polarized pro-Ryan. Issue handling and personal description items coded -1 (Poshard can best handle or best describes Poshard), 0 (neither/both equally), +1 (Ryan can best handle or best describes Ryan). "All items combined" is an average across scores given on all items, ranging from -1 (Poshard best on all) to +1 (Ryan best on all). R-sq is amount of variance in candidate impressions explained by both combined measures and seven-point party id scale. All correlations significant at p<.001.

It appears, therefore, that as was true of Bush and Gore in 2000, the overall candidate impression measure is a reasonable global summary of voters' impressions of both the subpresidential candidates' personal qualities *and* abilities to handle policy issues. In both states, perceived issue handling ability and personal quality fit combine in roughly equal proportions to explain roughly the same amount of variance in overall candidate impressions as was true for Bush and Gore in 2000. The key difference, however, is that *at the subpresidential level these personal and issue handling considerations seem to influence overall favorability more independently of partisanship.*

Results and Analysis

In the sixteen subpresidential contests examined, there tended to be little if any activation of direct party loyalty (in voting) over time. The typical pattern was for party identification to begin the cycle with a substantial zero-order correlation with the vote (usually in the r=.50 to r=.60 range), and then remain flat or even decline over time. Party identification seldom became substantially *more* correlated with the vote. This suggests that over time, subpresidential campaigns do more to decrease than increase party loyalty in voting; in most states, partisan defection is key to putting together a winning coalition.

That said, in many races the campaigns did succeed in *indirectly* activating party identification, by making it more relevant to the candidate impressions. In nearly every race examined, the correlation between partisanship and candidate impressions grew much larger over time. A common pattern was for the earliest surveys to show a fairly weak link (r=.20s to r=.30s range) between party and impressions, with election eve surveys showing these correlations to be considerably higher. In no instances did the connection between party and candidate impressions grow weaker over time. In other words, partisan identity did serve as a sort of cognitive schema which voters increasingly used to help them categorize their feelings about the competing candidates. Generally speaking, the longer the campaigns wore on, the stronger the connection between party identification and candidate impressions.

This leads to an important question: the relative importance of partisanship and candidate impressions as drivers of the vote. Even when the party identification component of the candidate impressions was partialled out, in nearly every race, over time, the independent component of candidate impressions overtook party identification as the strongest driver of the vote. This is quite different from the presidential races examined, where party almost always ended up more relevant to the vote than the independent effect of candidate impressions.

In examining changes, over time, in the relative impacts of direct party activation, indirect party activation, and independent candidate impressions on voting, I will group the races by the kinds of effects the campaigns produced. Within each type of effect, I will discuss the individual campaigns (along with reasons for the observed effects) in more detail.

In the analysis, I find two distinct patterns of activation effects over time. The most common was to observe an increase in the independent impact of candidate impressions on the vote, with party identification also increasingly impacting the vote independently (as a shaper of candidate impressions), but with no appreciable *direct* activation of partisanship as an independent vote driver. Of the sixteen races examined, ten fall into this category. Among the remaining six, four show an increase in the independent impact of candidate impressions — but with fairly little (if any) either direct or indirect activation of party identification over time. The two remaining races, the Missouri U.S. Senate contest in 2000 and the South Dakota gubernatorial race in 1990, show special patterns and will be discussed separately.

Candidate Impressions Independently Activated, Party Indirectly Activated

As noted above, ten of the sixteen races showed over-time independent activation of candidate impressions (above and beyond party identification), with some indirect activation of partisanship (as a driver of candidate favorability), but with little — if any — activation of partisanship as a direct driver of the vote over time. These races include five in Illinois (1990, 1994 and 1998 Governor; 1998 U.S. Senate; and 1998 Attorney General), two in Nevada (1998 Governor and U.S. Senate), Indiana 1990 U.S. Senate, Missouri 1998 U.S. Senate, and the Pennsylvania 1991 U.S. Senate special election. These races tended to be either hotly contested and focused on traditional partisan issues, or largely non-competitive. In both cases, the principal effect of the information environment was similar: voters increasingly relied on partisanship as a cognitive schema for evaluating candidates, and increasingly tied their impressions of candidates to the vote independently of partisanship, but did not tend to increase their reliance on partisanship as a direct determinant of the vote. A brief discussion of the patterns evidenced in each race follows.

The 1990 Illinois race was an open gubernatorial seat, with very intense campaign activity, resulting in a narrow win for Republican Jim Edgar over Democrat Neil Hartigan. The changes worked in the Illinois electorate over the closing months of the campaign were in many respects typical of races in this category, and are quite different from what was observed in the closing months of Presidential contests (previous chapter). In 1990 Illinois, between August and election eve, the independent relationship between candidate impressions and vote intention climbed from a partial r=.48 to partial r=.66. The only activation of party identification was indirect, as a shaper of candidate impressions; this relationship strengthened from r=.22 in August to r=.37 in November. There was almost no activation of party identification as a direct driver of the vote however. Importantly, in August, partisanship and candidate impressions were of almost identical strength as vote drivers; on election eve, candidate impressions had a substantially stronger independent relationship with vote choice than did partisanship. Finally, it should be noted that over the final three months of the campaign, Illinois voters became considerably more consistent in ordering their various preferences; the overall amount of variance in the vote explained by candidate impressions and partisanship climbed from .40 in August to .58 on election eve.

Table 5-3
Illinois Governor 1990

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
August	.40	.47	.48	.22	800
Oct 10-11	.52	.52	.60	.40	601
Oct 14-18	.48	.43	.60	.37	767
Oct 21-25	.55	.50	.63	.32	759
Oct 28-Nov1	.58	.50	.66	.37	752

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

Four years later, Jim Edgar was challenged by state comptroller Dawn Clark Netsch. As described in Chapter 2, immediately following the primary, the race was very close. However, after the full campaign, Edgar ended up winning by the widest margin in state history. He achieved this result not by activating partisanship; the correlation between party identification and the vote actually declined from r=.57 to r=.51, as Edgar's campaign built a strong bipartisan coalition. The indirect influence of partisanship, as a shaper of candidate impressions, increased only slightly (from r=.46 to r=.49). In the same time period, the independent importance of candidate impressions,

Table 5-4
Illinois Governor 1994

Date	Model R sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Dec 93	.50	.52	.56	.35	800
Apr 7-12	.58	.57	.62	.46	800
June 19-24	.52	.52	.59	.44	800
Aug 25-28	.61	.57	.65	.51	801
Sept 20-21	.57	.48	.67	.38	601
Oct 2-4	.57	.53	.64	.48	583
Oct 12-13	.62	.56	.67	.47	605
Oct 16-20	.58	.55	.64	.49	913
Oct 23-27	.61	.53	.67	.48	805
Oct 30-Nov 6	.61	.51	.69	.49	1070

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

shaped by campaign activity, climbed from a partial of r=.62 to r=.69. The substance of Edgar's campaign focused on Netsch's past votes in the state senate, especially on crime, which appeared to be outside the mainstream of public opinion. These were contrasted with Edgar's record of achievement and more moderate-to-conservative positions on crime issues. As a result, the campaign built impressions of the candidates which did more than activate partisan identity — and then connected these impressions to the vote independently of partisanship.

Four years later, a similar pattern again emerged in the Illinois gubernatorial race. Jim Edgar retired, and Republican Secretary of State George Ryan competed with Democratic Congressman Glen Poshard to replace him. The campaign dialogue focused on Poshard's staunch opposition to gun control, a brewing driver's license scandal which had occurred during Ryan's tenure as Secretary of State, and the appropriateness of each candidate's pervious experience. In the year preceding the election, the direct relevance of party identification to the vote started and finished at almost exactly the same point; it plunged sharply in late July, at the peak of Ryan's gun control attack on Poshard (which caused partisan defections among pro-gun Republicans and anti-gun Democrats), but then slowly climbed back to roughly the same level where it had been (r=.52). Similarly, party identification was slow to exercise much influence over candidate impressions until well after Labor Day; this correlation climbed as high as r=.41 by election eve, but not as high as the r=.49 evidenced in the same race four years earlier. Where the 1998 race most closely resembled the 1994 race was the degree to which candidate impressions became connected to the vote independently of partisanship: from a partial r=.34 one year out to r=.66 on election eve.

Table 5-5
Illinois Governor 1998

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Oct 97	.32	.48	.34	.19	800
Mar 25-30	.45	.53	.48	.27	800
July 7-10	.42	.51	.46	.28	800
July 24-26	.46	.38	.61	.19	500
Aug 7-9	.46	.43	.59	.16	500
Aug 27-30	.44	.44	.56	.25	800
Sept 24-27	.47	.49	.55	.33	600
Oct 6-8	.53	.47	.64	.30	600
Oct 11-15	.57	.49	.66	.36	930
Oct 18-22	.55	.48	.64	.38	880
Oct 25-29	.55	.49	.64	.38	877
Oct 31-Nov 1	.59	.52	.66	.41	413

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

In the same state that year, Republican Peter Fitzgerald challenged incumbent Democratic U.S. Senator Carol Moseley-Braun in a race that was oriented around more traditional partisan issues such as taxes and spending (and gun control, with Moseley-Braun attacking Fitzgerald for being too pro-gun). This race did activate partisanship to a substantial degree, increasing its correlation with the vote from r=.54 one year out to r=.67 in the final week of October (it did slip to r=.60 in the final two days, but this was a small sample). At the same time, however, the independent influence of candidate impressions on the vote grew from a partial r=.55 to a very high r=.75 on election eve. Interestingly, however, between the March primary and election eve, party identification grew little in its impact on candidate impressions.

Table 5-6
Illinois U.S. Senator 1998

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Oct 97	.51	.54	.55	.37	800
Mar 25-30	.63	.67	.57	.55	800
July 7-10	.56	.61	.56	.45	800
Sept 24-27	.65	.70	.56	.59	600
Oct 11-15	.68	.68	.66	.55	930
Oct 18-22	.63	.61	.65	.52	880
Oct 25-29	.70	.67	.67	.60	877
Oct 31-Nov 1	.72	.60	.75	.57	413

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

Also in Illinois in 1998, Jim Ryan faced only token opposition in his reelection bid for Attorney General, from Democrat Miriam Santos, a Chicago attorney. Ryan's recent (successful) bout with cancer had left him with substantial favorable ratings statewide. Santos engaged in almost no discernable campaign activity, leaving Ryan free to focus on his accomplishments as Attorney General; he ended up winning a landslide victory. Over the eleven months preceding the election, partisanship held steady or declined in importance as a vote driver. Not surprisingly, even though partisanship did exert some additional influence on candidate impressions (more than in January, and more than during his first election, which will be discussed in the next section) the independent influence of candidate impressions as a vote driver climbed markedly (from a partial of r=.34 to r=.49).

Table 5-7
Illinois Attorney General 1998

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Jan 15-19	.43	.60	.34	.21	800
July 7-10	.38	.52	.40	.21	800
Oct 11-15	.43	.55	.42	.29	930
Oct 18-22	.44	.55	.45	.30	880
Oct 25-29	.47	.59	.43	.31	877
Oct 31-Nov 1	.45	.53	.49	.35	413

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

In Missouri that same year, Republican Senator Kit Bond was challenged by Democratic Attorney General Jay Nixon. In the nearly two years preceding the election, the campaigns made party identification only slightly more relevant to the vote. All of the partisan activation was indirect, as a shaper of candidate impressions (climbing from r=.28 in January, 1997 to r=.45 on election eve). Even so, the candidate impressions grew to exert a very large independent influence on the vote; the partial on election eve was r=.62, up from r=.43 in the previous January.

Table 5-8
Missouri U.S. Senate 1998

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Jan 97	.41	.53	.43	.28	800
Jan 98	.49	.58	.48	.30	947
June 22	.42	.40	.56	.30	809
July 23-26	.44	.46	.54	.26	700
Sept 22-23	.56	.54	.62	.44	600
Oct 6-10	.61	.61	.61	.42	600
Oct 11-17	.58	.57	.61	.46	1101
Oct 18-22	.56	.56	.60	.44	1054
Oct 25-29	.58	.56	.62	.45	878

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

In Nevada, Bond's Democratic colleague Harry Reid faced a stiff challenge from Republican Congressman John Ensign; Reid ended up winning by only a few hundred votes. Over the course of the year preceding the election, the campaigns activated voter partisanship to only a small additional direct degree (from r=.63 to r=.64). While the relevance of party for candidate impressions did climb from r=.44 to r=.59, the independent influence of candidate impressions ended up an even stronger vote driver (partial r=.68) than party itself.

Table 5-9
Nevada U.S. Senate 1998

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Nov 14-18 1997	.53	.63	.46	.44	800
May 27-31	.62	.68	.54	.48	1000
Sept 3-10	.56	.57	.60	.48	802
Oct 10-13	.65	.65	.63	.58	725
Oct 21-23	.68	.64	.68	.59	726

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

That year's Nevada gubernatorial race evidenced a similar pattern. Democratic Las Vegas Mayor Jan Jones and Republican businessman Kenny Guinn competed for the open seat. The race focused more on Guinn's experience in business and Jones's mayoral performance than on strictly partisan issues. As a result, party identification declined as a vote driver, from r=.58 in May to r=.51 at the end of October. Over the same time period, the independent effect of candidate impressions climbed from a partial r=.51 to r=.71.

Table 5-10
Nevada Governor 1998

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
May 27-31	.51	.58	.51	.29	1000
July 9-12	.53	.56	.56	.32	700
Sept 3-10	.55	.45	.66	.37	802
Oct 10-13	.66	.53	.72	.48	725
Oct 21-23	.63	.51	.71	.47	726

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

In Indiana, Dan Coats won a special election in 1990 to fill out the remainder of Dan Quayle's U.S. Senate seat. Coats, who had been nominated to fill the seat temporarily, won by a comfortable margin over Democrat Baron Hill. In February, party dwarfed candidate impressions in importance, r=.57 to r=.31. By election eve, the importance of party declined to r=.52 but candidate impressions climbed to r=.52. In other words, as time went by in this race, the campaigns seemed to be doing little to increase the direct connection between voter partisanship and candidate choice. The campaigns wrought the biggest change in the electorate by shaping

Table 5-11
Indiana U.S. Senate Special Election 1990

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Feb 1990	.39	.57	.31	.20	805
June	.48	.63	.38	.37	800
Aug 16-18	.37	.49	.42	.21	600
Oct 12-15	.48	.58	.48	.29	601
Oct 22-25	.45	.55	.47	.28	601
Oct 27-Nov 1	.47	.52	.52	.33	750

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

impressions of the candidates that were themselves connected to the vote independently of partisanship.

One of the more unusual of these races is the special election held in Pennsylvania in 1991 to fill the U.S. Senate seat opened by the death of John Heinz. Harris Wofford, a former university president who was appointed to the seat by Democratic Governor Bob Casey, was challenged by the well-known former Republican Pennsylvania Governor Richard Thornburgh. The relatively short campaign lasted from late summer until the first week of November. In those months, the direct relevance of party remained fairly flat before spiking upward in the closing days of the campaign. Candidate impressions themselves started out fairly strongly connected to the vote (independently of partisanship) and grew even more closely tied to the vote as the campaigns progressed. By election eve, the correlation of party with the vote ended at r=.58; the partial correlation of candidate impressions with the vote ended at r=.69 (almost Presidential range). The campaigns also substantially reduced the amount of unexplained voting, increasing the model R-sq. from .47 to .65. The events that transpired seem to have helped voters make stronger and more consistent overall connections between party, candidate impressions, and the vote.

Interestingly, the biggest change over time was the connection of party identification with candidate impressions. At the beginning of the campaign, Thornburgh was fairly well-known and liked by voters of all partisan stripes. Wofford was virtually unknown. The Wofford campaign's strong emphasis on the health care issue seems to have signaled to Democrats that Wofford was "one of them;" Republicans and Democrats seem to have adjusted their feelings about the candidates accordingly. (Details about how Wofford did this will be discussed further in the next chapter of this dissertation.) What is interesting is that party identification ended up correlated almost as strongly with the candidate impressions as with the vote. The chief activation of partisanship was indirect, rather than direct. Even given this enormous indirect activation of party identification, however, the component of candidate impressions that was independent of partisanship ultimately proved a more powerful vote driver than partisanship itself.

Table 5-12
Pennsylvania U.S. Senate Special Election 1991

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
August	.47	.48	.57	.33	801
September	.54	.54	.60	.41	803
Oct 8-9	.55	.54	.61	.42	802
Oct 13-19	.59	.51	.67	.40	1052
Oct 20-26	.58	.51	.66	.43	901
Oct 27-28	.62	.49	.71	.41	602
Oct 29-31	.65	.58	.69	.52	752

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

Generally speaking, across these ten races, the direct connection between party identification and vote choice was relatively modest (compared to what the previous chapter showed to be the case for Presidential contests), and the size of this relationship tended to remain flat (or decline) as the campaigns wore on — even in the states where interviewing began very early in the election cycle. The independent influence of candidate impressions, by contrast, gained strength over time in all of these races. In nine of the ten races, candidate impressions ended up at least as strong of an independent vote driver (and often much stronger) than party identification.

Furthermore, in all of these races, the campaigns did make some indirect activation of party identification, as a shaper of candidate impressions. The size of the correlation *increase* ranged from .12 in Pennsylvania to .22 in the

1998 Illinois gubernatorial race. In other words, voters in these ten contests did tend to use party to organize their feelings about the candidates to a greater degree on election eve than they did earlier in the year. It should be noted, however, that even though the strength of these correlations increased over time, the coefficients tended to be remain much smaller than what was visible in Table 4-4 for Presidential contests. Furthermore, despite this indirect activation of party identification, it should be remembered that the independent relationship of candidate impressions with vote choice ended up catching or surpassing the direct importance of party itself by election eve.

In all ten races, the proportion of variance in the vote explained by party and candidate impressions together increased over time — and there were double digit increases in eight of the ten. The increases were smallest in the 1998 Illinois Attorney General race and 1990 special U.S. Senate election in Indiana, which (not coincidentally) were among the most lopsided from start to finish and featured the least campaign activity of the ten. Confirming a finding from Chapter 3, when campaigns are more highly contested, they more effectively serve the function of making voting decisions more firmly rooted in other supporting perceptions. Early in the cycle, there tended to be considerable unexplained voting, caused by mismatches between candidate perceptions, party identification, and candidate choice. Before exposure to campaign activity, many voters grounded their candidate choice in factors unrelated to either party or to impressions of the candidates themselves. Campaign activity tended to decrease these idiosyncrasies and increase voter consistency.

It should be noted, however, that even with these increases in explained vote, none of the election-eve R-squares comes close to the R-squares reported in Table 4-6. This seems to indicate that there is a fluidity to subpresidential races that is lacking at the Presidential level. In the latter, a voter's party and impressions of the candidates together account for nearly all of his vote choice — and this decision is pretty much locked up after Labor Day. In the former, there is still considerable room for change after Labor Day, and there is more room for still other considerations — beyond party and candidate impressions — to influence the vote. These other considerations could be partly random noise generated by low information; they could also include incumbent job performance, the appropriateness of each candidate's prior experience, or other factors which may exert an influence on the vote which is independent of party or personal feelings about the candidates themselves. (Uncovering the relative strength of those other considerations is beyond the scope of this chapter, but will be an avenue of future research.)

Candidate Impressions Independently Activated, Party Not Activated

Four of the sixteen races showed double-digit increases in the independent importance of candidate impressions as a vote driver, but showed minimal (if any) direct or indirect activation of partisanship. These included the 1990 Vermont gubernatorial race, an Illinois attorney general contest in 1994, and Missouri U.S. Senate races in 1992 and 1994. What these races share in common is substantial campaign activity, providing considerable information to voters, but in each case this information was mainly focused on traditionally less-partisan issues. These races were not devoid of partisan themes, but those partisan themes tended to take second place to “non-partisan” issues such as experience, expertise, bounced checks, hypocrisy, and so forth.

In Missouri in 1992, Democrat Geri Rothman-Serot challenged first-term incumbent Republican U.S. Senator Kit Bond. The campaigns ended up trading charges that were largely unconnected to partisan issues: Bond discussed Rothman-Serot’s tendency to “say one thing and do another,” while Rothman-Serot attacked Bond as an out of touch incumbent who had accomplished little. Voters seemed to respond to this tone accordingly: partisanship declined in strength as a direct vote driver, and changed very little over time as a shaper of candidate impressions. What *did* change considerably over time was the strength of candidate impressions as an independent driver of the vote; the partial correlation controlling for party identification climbed from r=.55 in August to r=.71 on election eve.

Table 5-13
Missouri U.S. Senate 1992

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
June 92		.52	N/A	N/A	600
Aug 92	.54	.59	.55	.45	600
Sept 92	.51	.54	.56	.42	800
Oct 11-15	.54	.52	.67	.36	900
Oct 18-22	.55	.51	.63	.45	750
Oct 24-29	.64	.52	.71	.45	900

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

A similar pattern emerged in the same state two years later, for a similar reason, when former Republican Governor John Ashcroft and Democratic Congressman Alan Wheat battled for the seat of retiring Senator Jack Danforth. The “issues” of the race ended up being surprisingly non-partisan, much like the 1992 race. Attention focused most on the two men’s respective experiences in politics, charges about John Ashcroft misusing state boats and planes while he was Governor, Wheat’s attempt to become the first African-American U.S. Senator from Missouri, and Wheat’s bounced checks as a U.S. Congressman.

The first poll in the race was taken more than one full year prior to the election, and party identification had a correlation with the vote of r=.54; after some slight wandering around, it would finish on election eve with exactly the same importance. Over the same period, the indirect importance of party as a shaper of candidate impressions increased only slightly (from r=.39 to r=.46) — but the independent importance of candidate impressions themselves climbed from a partial r=.46 to r=.68. In both of these Missouri U.S. Senate races, then, the campaigns activated voter partisanship to only a minor (and indirect) degree; their more important function was to build impressions of the candidates that were then connected to the vote independently of partisanship.

Table 5-14
Missouri U.S. Senate 1994

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Oct 22-26, 1993	.44	.54	.46	.39	600
Aug 3-7, 1994	.48	.52	.54	.41	800
Sept 28-29	.53	.52	.60	.46	605
Oct 15-16	.59	.53	.66	.42	901
Oct 17-20	.63	.59	.66	.50	1049
Oct 23-27	.61	.53	.68	.46	1099
Oct 30-Nov 2	.61	.54	.68	.46	600

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

That same year in Illinois, DuPage County state's attorney (prosecutor) Jim Ryan and Chicago attorney Al Hofeld competed for the open Attorney General seat. For a downballot race, this one was very high profile. Hofeld spent millions of dollars of his own money on the campaign, which in itself became a campaign issue; many suggested that he was trying to "buy" the election. In addition to Hofeld's spending, the campaign focused on Ryan's experience as a prosecutor, Hofeld's experience as a trial lawyer, and which was more appropriate preparation for an attorney general. Hofeld also made an issue of Ryan's pro-life stance on abortion. As a result of this largely experience-oriented campaign, party declined considerably as a driver of the vote (from r=.54 to r=.45), while the independent importance of candidate impressions climbed from a partial r=.42 to r=.58. By election eve, partisanship exerted almost no (r=.27) indirect influence on candidate evaluations. It appears that the campaign's focus on personal wealth, previous experience, and the abortion issue had the effect of sorting voters out according to their beliefs about those issues and how those issues (not party) made them feel about the candidates.

Table 5-15
Illinois Attorney General 1994

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Aug 25-28	.41	.54	.42	.20	801
Oct 2-4	.40	.50	.45	.22	583
Oct 12-13	.42	.47	.51	.20	605
Oct 16-20	.43	.44	.54	.18	913
Oct 23-27	.44	.46	.54	.28	805
Oct 30-Nov 6	.46	.45	.58	.27	1070

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

The 1990 Vermont gubernatorial race became an open seat contest after Democratic incumbent Madeline Kunin announced in April that she would not seek reelection. Many then considered former Republican governor Richard Snelling the front-runner; he was challenged by former state senator Peter Welch, who was unopposed in the Democratic primary. Much of the focus of the ensuing campaign was "nonpartisan" in nature; there was discussion of Welch's political ambitions, as he had discussed running for a number of offices but had never been elected statewide. Welch talked about Snelling's previous record as Governor, charging that the Republican was the candidate of "tired, old ideas" and that he, Welch, was the candidate of "new ideas." Snelling won by a modest 52 percent to 46 percent margin. It is also important to keep in mind that partisanship in Vermont, and the content of party labels, have long been different than in other states. It is therefore not

Table 5-16
Vermont Governor 1990

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
May	.47	.50	.54	.34	400
Oct 15	.46	.48	.55	.32	305
Oct 25	.63	.51	.71	.34	300

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

surprising that from start to finish, personal evaluations of the candidates were a much stronger independent vote driver than party identification was either directly or indirectly, and the independent importance of candidate impressions grew stronger over time.

The common thread among all four of these races is a primary focus on the background or character of the candidates, rather than on traditional partisan issues. Though traditional partisan issues were certainly discussed in all four races, they were not the chief focus of the campaign activity. This focus on the personal seems to have created the patterns of opinion formation observed: voting became increasingly a function of impressions of the candidates, with no direct or indirect activation of partisanship.

Two Special Cases

Two additional races deserve a special examination because of the distinctive patterns evidenced over time: the 1990 South Dakota gubernatorial race, and the 2000 Missouri U.S. Senate election.

The South Dakota race was a blowout more or less the entire way. Incumbent Republican George Mickelson was standing for reelection, challenged by Democrat Bob Samuelson. Mickelson led by 62 percent to 28 percent in July, and went on to win by 59 percent to 41 percent. Over the course of the election cycle, there was no direct activation of party identification as a vote driver, and only marginal activation of party as a shaper of candidate impressions. The candidate impressions themselves maintained a strong independent relationship with the vote from beginning to end, but did not substantially increase over time. Not surprisingly, the overall amount of variance in the vote also remained virtually unchanged over time. The lopsided nature of the race seems to have produced this flatline result, with little change evident over time.

Table 5-17
South Dakota Governor 1990

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
July	.47	.40	.61	.25	500
Oct 12-14	.48	.44	.60	.34	500
Oct 26-28	.49	.38	.64	.30	500

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

The 2000 Missouri U.S. Senate race was at the other end of the competitiveness spectrum. Of all the subpresidential contests discussed, this one most closely approximates the high profile of a Presidential election. Immediately after the 1998 election, Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan announced that he would challenge Senator John Ashcroft in the 2000 U.S. Senate race. Both men enjoyed near-universal name identification from the start, and both enjoyed the strong backing of their respective parties. A poll taken in early 1999, nearly two years before the election, showed correlations of r=.69 between party identification and the vote, r=.50 between party identification and candidate impressions, and a partial r=.48 between candidate impressions and the vote. As Table 5-18 shows, however, all the campaign activity that ensued did not manage to further activate partisanship as a direct driver of the vote. Even the indirect importance of party identification (as a driver of candidate impressions) largely held steady over the next year and a half. The independent importance of candidate impressions, meanwhile, climbed to a partial r=.61 in early September of 2000 and held that level through the next month.

On the night of October16th, Governor Carnahan died in a plane crash. Under Missouri law, Carnahan's name remained on the ballot. Though the degree of party voting held steady, almost overnight the importance of candidate impressions dropped from a partial r=.59 to r=.48. Whereas before his death opinions of Governor Carnahan were mixed, after the accident reported opinions of him were overwhelmingly favorable. Because many of those reporting a favorable opinion of the late Governor were still not voting for him, the correlation between candidate impressions and vote grew weaker. Interestingly, however, in the closing two weeks of the campaign these correlations again crept upward. Voters seemed to be moving beyond the shock of the Governor's sudden death and were prepared to connect their various attitudes in a manner more similar to where they were before the 16th.

Table 5-18
Missouri U.S. Senate 2000

Date	Model R-sq	Party ID with Vote	Impressions with Vote: Partial	Party with Impressions	N of cases
Feb-99	.60	.69	.48	.50	800
Feb-00	.54	.62	.50	.49	801
May	.49	.61	.44	.42	804
July	.56	.64	.51	.48	601
Aug 20-24	.54	.60	.54	.53	750
Aug 27-31	.57	.61	.56	.50	750
Sept 5-7	.54	.64	.49	.49	450
Sept 10-14	.59	.59	.61	.51	752
Sept 17-21	.63	.63	.62	.49	750
Sept 24-28	.60	.62	.60	.54	750
Oct 1-5	.59	.60	.60	.54	750
Oct 8-12, 15-16	.61	.63	.59	.55	1050
Oct 17-19	.54	.64	.48	.59	450
Oct 22-26	.62	.66	.57	.59	799
Oct 29-Nov 2	.62	.66	.57	.62	750

"Model R-sq" is amount of variance in vote explained by party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. "Party ID with Vote" is zero-order correlation between party identification and vote choice. "Impressions with Vote: Partial" is a partial correlation between composite favorability of the two candidates and the vote, with party identification partialled out. "Party with Impressions" is zero-order correlation between party identification and composite favorability of the two candidates. All correlations significant at p<.001.

In the end, the overall pattern of voter perceptions in this race again resembled a presidential contest: large amounts of variance explained from start to finish, a large and little-changed correlation between partisanship and vote, some indirect activation of party identification as a shaper of candidate impressions, and candidate impressions slightly less important than party identification as an independent vote driver.

Conclusions

Much of the previous campaign effects literature has focused on Presidential races, in large part because of data availability. My own Presidential data confirm much of the previous research about partisan activation: party identification plays an enormous role in driving presidential votes, this role tends to grow stronger over time as the campaigns progress, and the impact of partisanship consistently outstrips the independent effects of candidate impressions. These findings suggest that one of the chief roles of Presidential campaigns is to mobilize partisans and connect their existing feelings about the party with their eventual Presidential vote choice. While Presidential campaigns do build impressions of the candidates which are connected to vote choice independently of partisanship, party identification remains responsible for an enormous portion of the Presidential candidate impressions. Furthermore, only in rare instances (such as in the Independent-minded state of Maine) does the independent impact of Presidential candidate impressions surpass the importance of party identification in driving the vote.

It has heretofore been difficult to determine the degree to which subpresidential races resemble Presidential contests. My own analysis suggests that because the partisan cognitive barriers to defection are lower in subpresidential races and the contests are closer to home, voters appear to be more open to “learning” about the individual candidates, forming independent impressions of them, and making vote decisions that are less closely tied to one’s partisan predispositions. It appears that the campaign-inspired dynamics at work in subpresidential voting behavior can differ substantially from what occurs at the Presidential level.

Table 5-19 summarizes the over-time changes in correlations detailed in the foregoing tables, and adds the Missouri 2000 presidential results[49] as a comparison. In the presidential contest, the independent impact of candidate impressions improved by partial r=.10 (from partial r=.59 to partial r=.69) between May and election eve. In fourteen of the sixteen subpresidential races examined, the improvement was even greater than this — and in one case even as large as .32. In the presidential race, the direct impact of party identification on voting increased by r=.10 over the same time period (from r=.70 to r=.80). In only one of the subpresidential races did the importance of party identification improve by this much, and in seven of the contests it actually became *less* relevant to the vote choice by election eve. Regardless, in every instance, party identification had a much lower election eve impact on voting in subpresidential elections than in the presidential race.

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[49] I chose the Missouri results because data for that state stretches back the farthest in the cycle (May, 2000).

Table 5-19
Change in Correlations between Earliest Survey and Election Eve

State	Year	Race	Party Identification Direct	Party Identification Indirect	Independent Candidate Impressions	Vote Variance Explained
MO	**2000**	**President**	**.10**	**.08**	**.10**	**.14**
IL	1998	Governor	.04	.22	.32	.27
NV	1998	U.S. Senator	.01	.15	.22	.15
IN	1990	U.S. Senator	-.05	.13	.21	.08
IL	1998	U.S. Senator	.06	.20	.20	.21
NV	1998	Governor	-.07	.18	.20	.12
MO	1998	U.S. Senator	.03	.17	.19	.17
PA	1991	U.S. Senator	.10	.12	.19	.18
IL	1990	Governor	.03	.15	.18	.18
IL	1998	Attorney General	-.07	.14	.15	.02
IL	1994	Governor	-.01	.14	.13	.11
MO	1994	U.S. Senator	.00	.07	.22	.17
VT	1990	Governor	.01	.00	.17	.16
IL	1994	Attorney General	-.09	.07	.16	.05
MO	1992	U.S. Senator	.00	.00	.16	.10
SD	1990	Governor	-.02	.05	.03	.02
MO	2000	U.S. Senator	-.03	.12	.09	.02

Party identification also tended to have a much stronger *indirect* impact on presidential voting, from early in the cycle through election eve, than was true for any of the subpresidential elections investigated — even the most high-profile. In most of the subpresidential contests, however, especially those that focused on more traditionally partisan themes, the indirect importance of party, as a shaper of candidate impressions, tended to increase by a larger margin over time than was true in presidential voting.

As noted above, in the sixteen subpresidential contests examined, there tended to be little direct activation of party identification over time — even when the data window stretched back more than one full year before the election. The typical pattern was for party identification to begin the cycle with a substantial zero-order correlation with the vote (but weaker than in Presidential contests), and then remain flat or even decline over time. Party identification seldom became substantially *more* correlated with the vote. This suggests that subpresidential campaigns do not activate party loyalty in voting to the same degree that presidential campaigns do. Given that in most states it is necessary to win some partisan defectors in order to build a winning coalition, it is not surprising to see these coefficients decline somewhat over time. Importantly, it appears that voters in subpresidential elections are not simply "reverting" to partisanship in the face of low information. In many cases, candidates broadcast messages which were notably non-partisan or designed specifically to appeal to the opposing side's base. Voters seem to have responded to these messages as would be expected, with increased partisan defection, evidenced by weaker correlations between party identification and vote choice.

That said, in most races the campaigns did succeed in *indirectly* activating party identification, by making it more relevant to the candidate impressions. In nearly every race examined, the correlation between partisanship and candidate impressions grew much larger over time. In no instances did the connection between party and candidate impressions grow weaker over time. This suggests that as voters learned more about the candidates, they tended to use partisan identification as a cognitive schema to help array their impressions of those candidates. In no case, however, was the connection between party identification and candidate impressions as strong as it was for Presidential contests. It appears that in subpresidential contests, campaigns have the ability to break through the partisan barriers that exist at the presidential level, and build impressions of candidates which are not as closely tied up in partisanship as they are at the top of the ticket.

As an important further indication of this phenomenon, when the party identification component of the candidate impressions is partialled out, the independent portion of the candidate impressions overtook party identification as the strongest driver of the election eve vote in nearly every race. This is quite different from the presidential races examined, where party almost always ended up more relevant to the vote than the independent effect of candidate impressions. My research suggests that at the state level, campaigns do more than merely activate party voting. Campaigns build impressions of candidates that, while based to some degree on partisanship, impact the vote in a manner which is independent of partisanship.

Campaigns also serve the important function of making voters more consistent in their choices. In nearly every race examined, early in the cycle, partisanship and candidate impressions explained a relatively modest proportion of vote preference. In other words, a relatively large number of people were making trial heat choices that could not be accounted for by their partisanship or feelings about the candidates. Though many voters may have had their own internally consistent (if idiosyncratic) reasons for making the choices they did at that time, these choices were often not rooted in partisan preference or candidate impressions. In nearly every instance, campaign activity made the electorate considerably more likely to link trial heat vote choice with informed favorable and unfavorable opinions about the contending candidates. The explained variance in voting tended to increase substantially over time, and candidate impressions were responsible for most of the increase.

From a normative perspective, an electorate which collectively connects informed perceptions about candidates with votes for candidates to a strong degree seems inherently different from an electorate which chooses candidates with substantially less regard for impressions of those same candidates. The former has become collectively responsible in making coherent and rational connections between various preferences; the latter is more a collection of individual voters, each making largely idiosyncratic decisions about whom to support. This chapter has demonstrated one more manner in which subpresidential campaign activity helps assemble, shape, and bring about that more responsible electorate.

CHAPTER 6

MAKING ISSUES MATTER

The dissertation has repeatedly conceptualized the role of campaigns in statewide elections to be one of "producing responsibility." Early in a campaign cycle, many voters may express preferences for subpresidential candidates which are based largely on partisanship, what is known about only one of the candidates, or some purely idiosyncratic consideration. Early in the cycle, only small numbers of voters express a preference based on a thoughtful consideration of the merits of both candidates and the issues those candidates propose to address in office. Over time, the activities of the respective campaigns may or may not change the overall division of the vote; although changing the division of the vote is of great interest to candidates and consultants, it is only a peripheral concern of this dissertation. The fundamental contention of the dissertation is that campaign activity provides the electorate with additional information about both candidates, and this information leads voters to a better ordering of disparate preferences. Ultimately, as a result of campaign activity, voters are able to make an election day choice which is more firmly rooted in the merits, qualities, and priorities of the candidates themselves than was possible earlier in the cycle. As a result, *campaign activity is the mechanism which produces a more responsible electorate.*

Each candidate's prospective governing issue agenda is an extremely important facet of his candidacy, and as such ought to be an important consideration for voters in choosing between competing candidates. One candidate may propose overhauling the health care system as his top priority if elected. The other candidate may contend that reducing the state's income tax burden would be his own primary focus in office. One electorate may divide itself between these two hypothetical candidates without regard for the candidates' issue agendas; in this electorate, voters who care strongly about overhauling health care would be indistinguishable (in their voting behavior) from voters who care strongly about cutting taxes. In a more responsible electorate, voters would, to a much larger degree, side with candidates who share their own issue priorities and concerns. The present chapter examines the degree to which, and the circumstances under which, the respective campaigns' dialogue about issue priorities can establish that more responsible electorate.

If campaigns provide voters with useful information about candidate issue positions and issue priorities, evidence of this should emerge in the way voters divide themselves between the competing camps. Those who think a particular issue is important should be more inclined, *ceteris paribus,* to cast a vote for the candidate who emphasized that issue than those who think the candidate's issue focus is a low priority — or who are more concerned about the issue concerns of the opponent.

This process is commonly referred to as “priming.” As discussed in the introductory chapters, numerous experiments have demonstrated that campaign advertising can have a priming effect on voters. Priming is more difficult to demonstrate outside the laboratory, with surveys, but some researchers have found evidence that it occurs. (See Chapters 1 and 2 for more in-depth discussions of priming.)

It is often the case that a particular campaign will seize upon a small number of issues (or even one single issue) and attempt to make these the defining issues of the campaign. Because different issues are “owned” by different parties, giving candidates special credibility in addressing those issues (but not others), opposing campaigns quite frequently “talk past” each other, making only token references to the other side’s defining issue before changing the subject to the issues they would prefer to discuss. Often, campaign communications will return to the same theme or small handful of themes again and again over time. On election eve, it is often possible to look back and say that a particular candidate’s campaign was “*about* the health care issue” or “*about* the importance of cutting taxes.”

While there may be some dialogue between the two sides, as one campaign seeks to refute the most damaging charges the other campaign makes, each campaign tends to emphasize its own issue(s) rather than engage in extended discussion of the other side’s issue. This kind of distorted dialogue occurs because in nearly all instances, the issues a campaign chooses to emphasize are selected because the candidate in question is perceived to have a “natural” advantage on that issue. It is in the campaign’s interest, therefore, to keep the emphasis on its own advantages and minimize comparison with the opponent on the opponent’s advantaged issues.

An advantage could arise because a candidate’s party “owns” the issue in question and he is therefore assumed to be more competent in handling it. In other cases, the candidate may have particular experience or expertise — perhaps from previous jobs or offices held — that makes him especially credible in discussing that issue. Imagine, for example, an attorney general contest featuring a former prosecutor and a former defense attorney. The prosecutor will have a natural advantage in discussing crime control, even if the former prosecutor is a Democrat (and crime is not an “owned” issue for the Democratic Party). The advantage could also occur because one side is much closer to the mainstream consensus of public opinion on a non-trivial issue than the other. (Imagine an ardent pro-life candidate running statewide in California or a supporter of late term abortions campaigning in Utah. Abortion is an obvious issue for the opponent to emphasize in both instances.)

In exploring the effect that such campaigning has on the electorate, it would be theoretically possible to identify issue constituencies, track the vote among each, and compare the trial heat over time with the over-time issue content of free and earned media. The subject matter of newspaper stories and television spots could be coded, and the volume of material addressing particular issues could be tracked over time. This much detail is not necessary, however, and would seem to assume a high degree of volatility in public opinion. A campaign may generate a bit less media coverage about its principal issue in week 10 than in week 9, but it would be unreasonable to expect a knee-jerk decline in support for the candidate among voters interested in that issue. This kind of investigation is most interesting when one candidate suddenly introduces a new issue and begins spending considerable resources promoting it. It would be cumbersome to conduct this kind of investigation for multiple issues over the full course of a campaign.

A more “experimental” approach would identify members of an issue constituency and track the constituency’s loyalties over time in races where the issue was featured prominently and in races where it was not. Voters in a particular constituency should consistently display more polarization, over time, in races where “their” issue was emphasized than in races where “their” issue was only marginally important. When this comparison can be made across races in the same state in the same year, or across states in the same year, this becomes a type of natural experiment. This chapter will utilize such natural experiments to investigate the priming effect campaign information has on voting behavior. To a lesser degree, the chapter will also investigate general changes in the issue content of information flows over time in a given campaign and match these to changes in voting behavior among particular constituencies in that electorate, but will not attempt to make an exhaustive documentary of each week's precise mix of issue content.

Data and Methodology

The analysis will examine six races in four states. The six races represent a variety of campaign environments, and provide a look at priming effects under a number of different circumstances. For each race, a large number of cross-sectional survey interviews are available between the primary and general elections. The races to be examined include:

- Pennsylvania 1991 U.S. Senate special election (N=3860).
- Illinois 1998 gubernatorial and U.S. Senate elections (N=5901).
- Missouri 1998 U.S. Senate election (N=5243).
- Nevada 1998 gubernatorial and U.S. Senate elections (N=2253).

While these races do not form a representative sample of all election contests, they do include an important variety of campaign milieux. Some were dominated by one or two highly polarizing partisan issues; others focused more on the personal qualities of the competitors (or local issues which were not necessarily partisan in nature). Geographically, all major regions except the Deep South are represented. The Pennsylvania race was (essentially) an open seat, as were the two gubernatorial races. Democrats won two of the races (Pennsylvania and Nevada Senate), and Republicans won four of them. None of the races was a blowout; all were competitive. Two of the races featured an incumbent (Illinois Senate) or incumbent-like (Pennsylvania Senate) candidate who was ultimately defeated.

In each case, issue constituencies are determined by asking voters which of six issues is most important to them. Those selecting one of these issues are then asked which issue is second-most important. Any person naming an issue as most or second-most important is counted as belonging to that constituency.

There are two notable problems with this closed-end method of identifying issue constituencies. The format is both suggestive (putting issues into voters minds that they may not have thought of on their own) and limiting (because it forces voters into particular categories and ignores “other” concerns). If the campaign takes a dramatic turn and some new issue is introduced, the list either has to be modified — making direct comparisons to past interviews problematic — or the issue has to be ignored. (In only two of these six campaigns, however, were the issue lists modified over time. These will be discussed in more detail later.)

An ideal methodology might ask voters, open-ended, to name the one or two issues most important to them. Such a methodology is impractical for most campaigns, however. It is both prohibitively expensive, and it tends to generate mentions of peripheral issues which neither candidate would ever discuss; this would greatly reduce the cell sizes for truly relevant constituencies, and therefore the reliability of the analysis. The closed end format provides a clean alternative with consistent categories of relevant issues over time.

In two instances, the Illinois and Nevada Senate contests, the lists of six issues were actually drawn up for the gubernatorial races and specifically asked which is most important "for state government to address." There was no corresponding list crafted especially for either Senate race[50]. In Illinois, nearly all of the gubernatorial issues were also featured in the Senate contest, and there were no special Senate issues missing from the list. For this reason, there should be little concern about using the "state government" issue constituencies to examine the Senate race.[51] Nevada is more problematic. Two of the six issues were specific to the gubernatorial race, and one important Senate race issue was missing from the list. This difficulty, and the limitations it places on my conclusions, will be discussed below (in the Nevada section).

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[50] The primary client of Market Strategies in Nevada was gubernatorial candidate Kenny Guinn. Guinn's polls included some core questions, such as trial heat and candidate favorability, for the Senate race, but the Senate race was not the primary object of the research.

[51] Some may object that voters could have a separate issue agenda for the federal government. While this is a valid concern, and changing the wording to mention "federal government" issues may yield somewhat different constituencies, the methodology actually used at least gets us into the ballpark and identifies important voter concerns.

In examining each state's voting behavior, the simplest approach would be to track the vote over time among each issue constituency, look for dramatic changes, and compare these changes to changes in the content of the campaign discourse. This might be an effective methodology for a panel study, but there is a difficulty in using it with a cross-sectional design: a pro-Democrat shift in the vote may simply reflect more Democrats in the constituency than in the previous wave of interviewing. To control for any such shifts in the partisan composition of issue constituencies, I will, in each case, compute the *committed* Republican vote (the percent voting Republican, with those undecided made missing, such that the percent Republican and percent Democrat adds to 100 percent) and compare it to the *normal* Republican vote[52] for that issue constituency. When the deviation from normal is a positive number, it means the Republican is overperforming with the constituency compared to a typical Republican; when the deviation is negative, the Democrat is overperforming with that constituency compared to a typical Democrat. Any significant deviation from normal indicates that some short term force (almost certainly the campaign and the information it produces) is acting on that constituency to move it away from the vote it would cast based on partisanship alone. This methodology has two advantages: it controls for shifts in the partisan composition of the sample, and it measures the degree to which issue constituencies respond above and beyond what partisanship alone would predict.

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[52] The normal vote itself, and the theoretical and empirical basis for it, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.

The investigation that follows will examine the conditions under which campaign-generate issue discourse leads voters to cast ballots more in line with issue preferences — and the conditions under which these priming effects are minimal. For each of the six election contests examined, I will first give a brief overview of each side's campaign and the key issues each side emphasized. These accounts will be drawn from my own personal notes, interviews with campaign consultants, newspaper archives, and *Hotline* stories[53].

I will then produce a table detailing the electorate's issue agenda over the course of the campaign period. This will show the relative size of each issue constituency and demonstrate the degree to which each campaign had an *agenda setting* effect on the electorate over time. If campaigns serve an agenda setting function, substantially larger numbers of voters should cite the campaign's key issue as an important concern at the end than at the beginning of the period investigated.

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[53] The *Hotline* is a daily political newsletter, available electronically, published in Alexandria, Virginia. It is an invaluable compilation of media accounts of major election races and other political news from across the country. Nearly every political consultant reads or is familiar with this publication. Its fully searchable archives date to 1987.

For each issue constituency and for each wave of interviewing, I will then compute the committed Republican vote, normal Republican vote, and size of the deviation from normal (committed vote minus normal vote). I will also compute a t-statistic (with significance level), to determine if the deviation from normal is statistically significant. For a handful of key issues, I will produce a line graph of the deviations from normal over time. These key issues are selected to be especially illustrative; to chart all six issue constituencies in every race would yield unreadable graphs. It should be emphasized that although I will not graph all six constituencies, all six (and the statewide total) will be included in a backup table for each race.

Although I must, of necessity, go into some detail about each race, the purpose of this chapter is not to recount tales of electioneering in various venues. *The primary purpose of this chapter is to explain how the content of campaign issue messages leads electorates to behave more responsibly at the polls.* In this case, "behaving more responsibly" means that voters who are especially concerned about a particular issue should be especially likely to support candidates who have made that issue a high priority in their governing agenda. In examining the data, there are three potential signals that campaign discourse has generated a more responsible electorate:

- After a given issue is introduced into campaign discourse, that issue's constituency changes its deviation from normal voting to a significant degree, in the direction of that issue's champion. Or, when discussion of a given issue is silenced, that issue's constituency reverts to normal voting behavior.
- Among constituents of an issue championed by a particular candidate from start to finish of an election cycle (predating even the first poll), there is a strong and persistent deviation from normal voting in the direction of that issue's champion.
- When there are two major statewide races in the same state in the same year, and these feature sharply different issue discourses, voters in a given constituency should deviate from normal voting to a much greater degree in the race where "their" issue was featured than in the race where "their" issue was only a peripheral concern.

The process of producing the more responsible electorate may vary somewhat from state to state and from race to race. The following six examples are intended to give insight into some of the different ways in which this process works, and the circumstances under which campaign discourse is especially effective in producing voter responsibility.

Pennsylvania 1991 U.S. Senate Special Election

When John Heinz, the Republican Senator from Pennsylvania, was killed in a plane crash in April of 1991, Democratic Governor Robert Casey appointed Harris Wofford to replace him. Wofford had a long public career as a liberal Democrat. He had been active in the civil rights movement in the 1950s, worked in the Kennedy administration, helped to establish the Peace Corps, been President of Bryn Mawr College, but, when appointed to replace Heinz, was a virtually unknown (to the public) member of Casey's cabinet.

On the Republican side, U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh quickly emerged as the consensus choice to challenge Wofford. He had served for eight years as Governor, and enjoyed strong name identification and personal favorability throughout the state. He was a fiscal conservative and social issue moderate, with an overall political profile that fit nicely into the moderate traditions of Pennsylvania's Republican establishment. Thornburgh had served two terms as governor, won with comfortable margins both times, had left office in 1986 with approval levels above 60 percent, and served as Attorney General under Bush. When he formally announced his candidacy in August, more than two-thirds (71 percent) of Pennsylvanians held a favorable opinion of him. By contrast, only 18 percent knew enough about Wofford to form an impression, and these were fairly evenly divided between favorable (11 percent) and unfavorable (7 percent).

Wofford's own research team uncovered health care as a salient issue, one with the potential to catapult him ahead of Thornburgh, and used these private poll findings to raise over one million dollars in campaign funds. (See Blunt, Petrocik and Steeper, 1998 for more details about the campaign. Casey, 1996 provides other important details.) Wofford ran his first health care spot in early September. Standing in a hospital corridor, he explained to the camera that the Constitution guarantees criminals the right to a lawyer. He then went on to assert: "If criminals have the right to a lawyer, I think working Americans should have the right to a doctor. That's why I'm fighting for national heath insurance in the Senate." This advertising was followed by numerous references to health care in Wofford's stump speeches as the campaign gave the issue increasing prominence. As Wofford rose in the polls through September and mid-October, observers widely credited the health care issue as being the fire behind this rise.

In early September, at the same time he launched the first health care spot, Wofford also aired a spot criticizing free trade and emphasizing the need to protect Pennsylvania jobs from foreign competition. As the campaign wore on, however, neither candidate gave this issue much attention. Instead, in addition to health care, the two sides traded charges about corruption and other candidate negatives.

By mid-October, when the two sides engaged to discuss substantive issues, health care (and how to reform it) largely pushed other issues into the background. Wofford released more details for a national health insurance plan, and introduced a bill in the Senate to cut off health coverage for members of Congress themselves until benefits were extended to all Americans. Wofford aired a spot in late October touting this bill; although few gave the proposal any realistic chance of being enacted, it gave Wofford yet another opportunity to hammer away about the need for reform — and, most importantly, to demonstrate that he was already taking steps to pursue that reform.

Thornburgh, by contrast, was never able to achieve much traction with any issue. Although Thornburgh tried to articulate such traditional Republican themes as crime and taxes, he had difficulty making these messages resonate with voters. Wofford made several attacks on Thornburgh's record as Attorney General and raised questions about Thornburgh's performance as governor. Wofford drew even with Thornburgh in the final weekend of the campaign — and went on to win by ten points on election day.

The Pennsylvania campaign seems to have had little or no *agenda-setting* effect. In late September, 39 percent cited "improving the nation's health care system" as the most or second most important issue in the Senate race; this

Table 6-1
Percent of 1991 Pennsylvania Voters Choosing Each Issue as Most or Second Most Important

	Bringing more jobs to PA	Improving the nation's health care system	Combating crime and drugs	Holding the line on taxes	Protecting PA jobs from foreign competition	A candidate's background and experience in government
Sept 24-26	55	39	42	33	28	N/A
Oct 8-9	60	36	34	37	27	N/A
Oct 20-26	46	36	21	32	24	12
Oct 27-28	49	30	26	29	22	11
Oct 29-31	43	33	26	31	21	12

Note: "background and experience" was added to the list in late October. Earlier interviews included only the other 5 items.

actually declined slightly (to 33 percent) by election eve. Roughly half said they were concerned about bringing more jobs to the state, and another quarter cited protecting jobs from foreign competition. Approximately one-third were highly concerned about taxes. Thornburgh's signature issue, combating crime and drugs, seems to have declined somewhat in importance; 42 percent said it was important early, but only 26 percent said so on election eve. However, this apparent decline seems due in part to the introduction of a new issue to the list, "a candidate's background and experience in government." Both this issue and crime/drugs were important concerns of Republicans; it seems likely that many of the 11-12 percent who cited background and experience would have otherwise cited crime (had experience not been on the list).

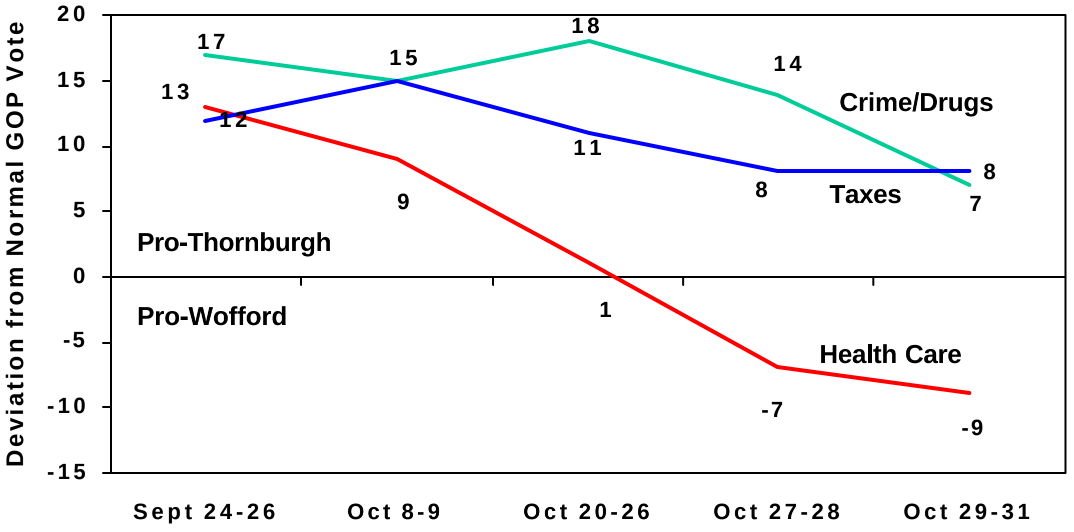
Pennsylvania Issue Salience

For each of these issue constituencies, it is possible to compute the committed Republican vote, normal Republican vote, the size of the deviation from normal (committed vote minus normal vote), and the statistical significance of this deviation. Table 6-2 is an encyclopedic documentation of all of these figures, for every constituency, over the course of the campaign period. Because this table is so dense, for illustration purposes I have selected three key issue constituencies to display graphically. Figure 6-1 shows the deviation from normal partisan voting for those voters concerned about “improving the nation’s health care system,” “holding the line on taxes,” and “combating crime and drugs.” The first of these was, of course, Wofford’s principal campaign theme from start to finish. The other two were Thornburgh’s primary emphases on the stump.

Thornburgh managed to significantly overperform a typical Republican on both of “his” issues. Although there was some decline in the size of this overperformance, as Wofford began to build an electoral tide, even on election eve these two constituencies continued to give Thornburgh significantly more support than they would give a normal Republican candidate. Although not shown in Figure 6-1, the “bringing jobs to Pennsylvania” constituency followed a similar trend; although the size of Thornburgh’s overperformance declined somewhat as the election approached, he always did significantly better than a typical Republican.

The health care constituency behaved entirely differently. Although at the beginning of the campaign Thornburgh significantly overperformed with

Figure 6-1
Issue Priming in Pennsylvania 1991 U.S. Senate Race
Deviation from Normal Republican Vote by Issue Constituency



those concerned about health, by the end of the fourth week of October this group was voting almost exactly as its partisanship would predict. Over the course of the final week of October, *Wofford* began to significantly overperform with this constituency. By election eve, Wofford was doing nine percentage points better than a typical Democrat with those concerned about health care.

Table 6-2
Pennsylvania 1991 U.S. Senate Special Election
Committed Republican Vote, Normal Republican Vote, and Deviation by Issue Constituency

	Total					
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	N=
Sept 24-26	64	50	14	8.9	.000	804
Oct 8-9	63	50	12	7.2	.000	802
Oct 20-26	58	50	8	5.2	.000	896
Oct 27-28	54	49	6	2.2	.025	598
Oct 29-31	51	47	4	1.8	.065	750

	Health Care					Combating crime and drugs				
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig
Sept 24-26	56	44	13	4.6	.000	67	51	17	7.1	.000
Oct 8-9	56	47	9	2.8	.006	67	52	15	5.2	.000
Oct 20-26	47	45	1	0.4	.716	67	49	18	4.1	.000
Oct 27-28	33	40	-7	-2.2	.031	63	49	14	3.2	.002
Oct 29-31	28	36	-9	-3.4	.001	60	53	7	2.0	.044

	Experience					Holding the line on taxes				
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig
Sept 24-26						71	59	12	4.4	.000
Oct 8-9						71	56	15	5.5	.000
Oct 20-26	73	62	12	2.8	.007	67	56	11	2.8	.005
Oct 27-28	76	64	12	1.8	.070	64	56	8	2.1	.038
Oct 29-31	72	60	12	2.6	.011	63	55	8	2.4	.017

	Bringing jobs					Protecting jobs				
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig
Sept 24-26	63	48	16	7.1	.000	64	50	14	4.7	.000
Oct 8-9	62	50	12	5.9	.000	59	47	12	3.4	.001
Oct 20-26	58	48	11	3.6	.000	50	50	0	-0.4	.708
Oct 27-28	55	47	8	2.9	.005	50	47	3	0.3	.758
Oct 29-31	53	46	7	2.8	.006	43	42	1	-0.1	.927

The Pennsylvania 1991 U.S. Senate race is an excellent example of how a largely uninformed electorate becomes more “responsible” in its voting decisions as it is introduced to campaign information. At the beginning of the race, Thornburgh was the only candidate about which the electorate had information, and he enjoyed double-digit overperformance with every issue constituency measured. As election day approached, voters were supplied with additional information about each candidate's priorities and the problems he would attempt to solve if elected. Thornburgh continued to overperform with those concerned about most of the issues he emphasized. Wofford began to overperform with those concerned about his own signature issue, health care reform.

Every election contest does not offer such a clean initial slate, however. General elections are usually preceded by primary election campaigns, which give voters some preview of what is to come later. Even when one candidate is a well-known incumbent or other officeholder, the primary election process, with its attendant publicity, allows a challenger to become better known by the electorate he seeks to represent. In other words, voters often begin a general election campaign period with a better idea of the respective candidates' issue specialties and emphases than they did in Pennsylvania.

For this reason, of the six races examined in this chapter, the Pennsylvania special election of 1991 most closely resembles a laboratory experiment; the results are clean and dramatic, but may not be representative of a more typical campaign. The following five races do not feature the dramatic movement evidenced in Pennsylvania, in large part because the candidates and their respective issue agendas were better known from the beginning than Harris Wofford was. These five races do provide some very interesting circumstances of their own, however, and taken together will help build some generalizations about the kinds of effects campaigns have on issue voting.

Illinois 1998 Gubernatorial Race

The Illinois 1998 gubernatorial contest was in fact quite different from the special election in Pennsylvania. The Republican nominee, George Ryan, was well-known and had been active in state politics for many years. He had served as Speaker of the Illinois House, Lt. Governor, and most recently as Secretary of State. Ryan faced no serious opposition for the GOP nomination. Ryan was a moderately conservative Republican on many issues, but more a pragmatist and never an ideologue. Ryan had long emphasized his ability to work with both Republicans and Democrats (an implicit rejection of ideological allegiance), and an early campaign slogan was “He gets things done.” He was pro-life on abortion, supported the death penalty, and opposed tax increases — but favored moderate controls on firearms, such as the Brady Bill waiting period and a ban on assault weapons.

The Democrats, by contrast, had a bruising fight amongst themselves leading up to the March primary. Multiple urban liberal candidates divided the Chicago vote, allowing downstate Congressman Glenn Poshard to win a narrow victory statewide. Poshard represented an expansive, largely rural district in the far south of the state. He served in the Korean War, and worked as a teacher and a coach before winning election to Congress in 1988.

On many issues, Poshard was a typical Democrat: he opposed NAFTA, opposed school vouchers, supported national health care, and enjoyed strong backing from labor unions. He pledged not to accept corporate campaign contributions, and his campaign slogan was “He’s one of us.” On two other issues, however, Poshard was at odds with his party’s leadership: he was strongly pro-life on abortion, and over the years also accumulated a strongly pro-NRA voting record on gun issues. While the Illinois electorate is fairly evenly divided on abortion, Poshard’s opposition to the Brady Bill and an assault weapons ban put him far outside the mainstream of state public opinion on guns. His support for the coal industry, a major employer in his district, had also led to some votes on environmental issues which were at variance with the rest of the state. He opposed the Clean Air and Clean Water acts, for example, and pressured a federal agency to buy dirtier high-sulfur coal from his district rather than cleaner low-sulfur coal from elsewhere.

The Ryan campaign used a series of polls and focus groups, similar to the process outlined in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, to determine that the contrast between the two candidates on gun control was least-understood by the electorate and would have the greatest impact on the vote once it was widely understood.

The difficulty for the Ryan campaign was gun control ranked near the bottom of the Illinois electorate's issue agenda in 1998. Education and crime dominated voter concerns. Education was always a concern of a majority of voters, and at least 40 percent consistently said that combating crime and drugs was important. Patient rights, taxes, and gun control formed a second tier, with none breaking 30 percent (and gun control never breaking 20 percent). Environmental protection consistently ranked at the bottom of the agenda, never garnering more than twelve percent. On average, however, a majority (56 percent) mentioned crime, guns or both as the #1 and/or #2 issue. The challenge and opportunity for Ryan lay in turning the gun issue into a question about crime; doing so would appeal to liberals and women who were concerned about guns, while also appealing to centrists who focused on the horrific crimes in which those guns are used.

Table 6-3
Percent of 1998 Illinois Voters Choosing Each Issue as Most or Second Most Important

	Improving Public Education	Combating Crime and Drugs	Protecting Patient Rights in Health Care Plans	Holding the line on state taxes	Controlling Guns	Protecting the state's air and water from pollution
July 7-10	59	43	21	22	17	11
Aug 27-30	56	46	24	28	19	12
Sept 24-27	59	44	22	25	18	9
Oct 6-8	61	45	28	27	17	12
Oct 11-15	60	42	28	22	18	11
Oct 18-22	58	44	29	23	17	10
Oct 25-Nov 1	56	40	29	24	19	12

The Ryan campaign fielded a benchmark poll in early July, immediately before launching an enormous statewide advertising campaign on the gun issue. Ryan’s overall lead was ten points. In later July and August, Ryan’s lead would expand to 23 points. Poshard made little direct response to the attack on gun control, apart from citing the nature of his district and the quality of representation he owed his constituents. In late July and in August, Ryan added an attack on Poshard’s environmental record; a spot described the congressman’s opposition to environmental legislation and support for “dirty” coal.

Discussion of the environment did not air for long, however. Ryan continued to hammer Poshard on guns, and also emphasized his own ability to “get things done.” In September, Ryan added spots about taxes and economic growth, charging that Poshard would support “job-crushing new taxes” but that “I [Ryan] don’t need a tax increase to run state government.” There were also spots about education in this period, but Ryan always returned to his key signature theme most loudly: the contrast on gun control. In early September, the Fraternal Order of Police endorsed Ryan, and soon thereafter Jim and Sarah Brady did the same.

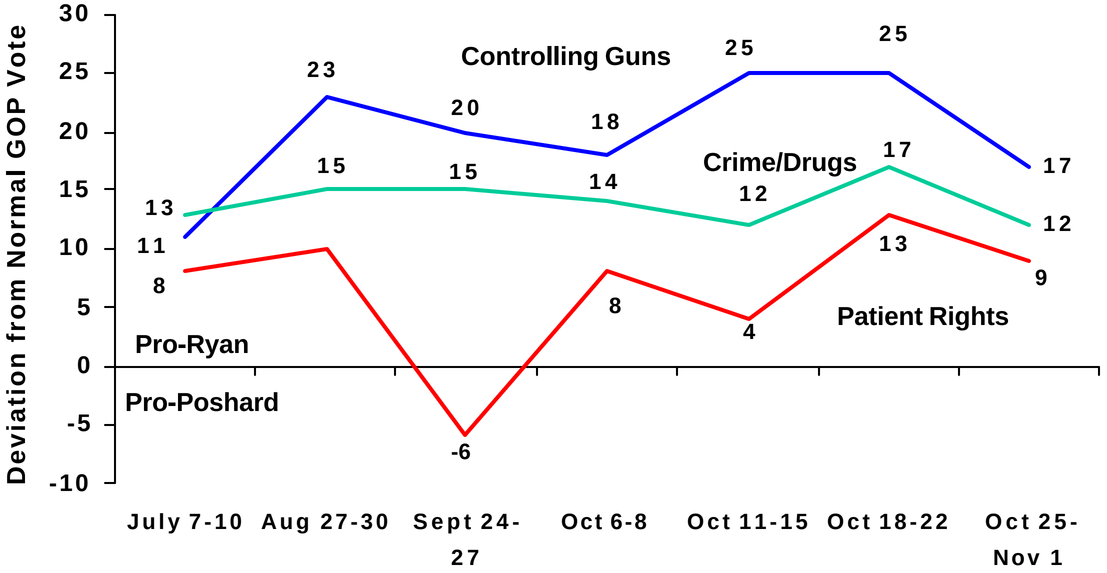
Poshard, in the meantime, had trouble gaining traction with any of his themes. He tried discussing patient rights and health care reform in July and August, and returned to this theme in early October, but found it difficult to move beyond voter concerns about guns. He also became embroiled in various other distractions: charges that he was anti-gay dominated the news for days in early August, and in late August he made statements in favor of corporal punishment in schools. In September, he charged Ryan with “living the good life” by using campaign contributions for personal luxuries. Although he tried to argue that his experience as a teacher made him ideally suited to address education, the state’s largest teacher’s union endorsed George Ryan.

In early October, the campaign took a sudden and dramatic turn. Federal indictments were handed down for several employees in Ryan’s Secretary of State office. The key charges were that employees had sold large numbers of commercial drivers licenses to unqualified truckers, and then diverted some of these monies into Ryan’s campaign coffers. The scandal became known as “licenses for bribes,” and it dominated the news in October. More than four hundred stories about the scandal aired on local television during the last six weeks of the campaign. Poshard tried to capitalize on the issue, airing a spot about six children who had been killed by one of the illegal truckers. Ryan responded that this was over the line, and charged that Poshard was just trying to distract voters from Poshard’s own “extreme” record on gun control. At every opportunity, then, Ryan returned to guns. Although other issues (especially education and taxes) were sometimes discussed, gun control was far and away the dominant theme of Ryan’s campaign. Ryan maintained double-digit leads, even in the heat of the scandal allegations, through the end of October. The race did tighten up somewhat over the final weekend, however, and Ryan's final victory margin ended up being three and a half points.

Illinois Gubernatorial Issue Salience

Figure 6-2 charts the deviation from normal partisan voting among three key issue constituencies: gun control, crime/drugs, and patient rights. The first two constituencies were special targets for Ryan campaign messages; of all Poshard's themes, patient rights was one he articulated most clearly. Ryan did extraordinarily well with the gun control constituency, and also did significantly better than a typical Republican with those concerned about crime. Before the big advertising wave on guns, Ryan was overperforming by 11 points with those who said the issue was important. While this was a significant overperformance even then, his advertising blitz was able to more than double that margin in just seven weeks. Ryan continued to overperform by 18-25 points with this group all the way into late October. The overperformance lessened somewhat in the last week, but remained highly significant — and well above where it had been in July. Furthermore, the gun control message seems to have had the desired spill-over effect with those concerned about crime. Overperformance with that constituency remained in solidly double digit territory all the way up to the election.

Figure 6-2
Issue Priming in Illinois 1998 Gubernatorial Race
Deviation from Normal Republican Vote by Issue Constituency



Poshard's patient rights message seems to have held down Ryan's margin with the issue's constituents, but the Democrat was never able to establish a significant lead of his own with that group. It is regrettable that "cleaning up corruption in state government" was not offered as an issue choice, because it would have been interesting to have tracked Poshard's inroads with that group as scandal allegations mounted.

Two other constituencies deserve special mention, though they are not included in Figure 6-2. As Table 6-4 shows, Ryan seems to have gotten off on the wrong foot with the "taxes" constituency. Although he always did well with this heavily Republican group, he did not significantly ($p<.01$) overperform with them until early October — which, not coincidentally, coincides with Ryan's advertising on taxes and economic growth. The tax constituency seems to have heard what it needed to know, because Ryan went on to overperform solidly with that group through election day.

The "environmental" constituency is the other interesting one. This solidly Democratic audience voted, for the most part, its partisanship; its committed Republican vote was seldom significantly different from its normal Republican vote — except in the wake of Ryan's advertising on the subject. The late August and early October spikes in Ryan's support with this constituency correspond roughly with the airing of ads pointing out Poshard's opposition to the Clean Air and Clean Water acts. After Ryan abandoned this line of attack in favor of the gun control contrast, the constituency returned to its normal behavior. This points up the ability for campaign activity to produce short-term defections on a particular issue that is traditionally a strength of the opposition — but unless those messages are consistently reinforced, it seems difficult to produce lasting changes in behavior.

Table 6-4
Illinois 1998 Gubernatorial Election
Committed Republican Vote, Normal Republican Vote, and Deviation by Issue Constituency

	Total					
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**N=**
July 7-10	56	47	9	4.9	.000	800
Aug 27-30	63	48	15	8.9	.000	800
Sept 24-27	58	48	10	4.3	.000	600
Oct 6-8	61	48	13	6.7	.000	600
Oct 11-15	59	47	11	7.3	.000	930
Oct 18-22	63	48	15	9.2	.000	880
Oct 25-Nov 1	58	48	11	8.5	.000	877

	Controlling Guns					Crime				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
July 7-10	54	42	11	2.4	.019	61	49	13	4.9	.000
Aug 27-30	64	41	23	6.4	.000	65	50	15	6.3	.000
Sept 24-27	64	44	20	4.2	.000	63	48	15	4.8	.000
Oct 6-8	57	38	18	3.8	.000	64	50	14	5.0	.000
Oct 11-15	67	42	25	7.0	.000	60	49	12	5.1	.000
Oct 18-22	64	39	25	6.0	.000	66	50	17	7.0	.000
Oct 25-Nov 1	57	40	17	5.9	.000	62	50	12	5.7	.000

	Education					Taxes				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
July 7-10	57	47	10	4.6	.000	57	57	0	-0.3	.736
Aug 27-30	63	47	16	7.2	.000	65	58	7	2.1	.034
Sept 24-27	57	48	9	3.0	.003	67	61	7	1.7	.096
Oct 6-8	60	47	14	5.2	.000	72	59	12	3.7	.000
Oct 11-15	59	47	12	5.9	.000	69	60	9	3.1	.002
Oct 18-22	63	48	15	7.3	.000	67	57	10	3.4	.001
Oct 25-Nov 1	58	46	12	7.0	.000	65	58	7	2.9	.004

	Patient Rights					Environment				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
July 7-10	52	44	8	2.0	.044	52	47	5	1.3	.209
Aug 27-30	53	42	10	3.0	.003	67	51	16	3.3	.002
Sept 24-27	39	45	-6	-1.6	.124	47	48	-1	-0.6	.549
Oct 6-8	52	44	8	1.9	.062	66	44	22	3.3	.002
Oct 11-15	48	44	4	1.3	.211	50	42	8	1.3	.201
Oct 18-22	59	46	13	4.3	.000	46	45	1	0.2	.862
Oct 25-Nov 1	53	44	9	3.7	.000	53	45	8	1.8	.073

Illinois 1998 U.S. Senate Race

The Illinois U.S. Senate race that same year featured more traditional partisan divisions on ideological issues. One of the biggest issues in the race in fact turned out to be the incumbent herself. Carol Moseley-Braun had made a big splash in 1992 when she became the first elected black female U.S. Senator. Now, facing reelection, she was dogged by charges of questionable professional and personal behavior. The IRS was investigating possible financial wrongdoings, and her recent warm meeting with a Nigerian dictator caused considerable negative press back home. These and other embarrassing personal missteps had left Moseley-Braun with inflated negative ratings. In addition, she seemed to have few substantive accomplishments on which to campaign.

On the Republican side, conservative state senator Peter Fitzgerald scored an upset victory over state comptroller Loleta Didrickson in the March primary. Didrickson, a moderate, had been the favorite of the party establishment and led in many early polls. Fitzgerald spent millions of his own dollars emphasizing his conservative credentials, especially on taxes, and managed to turn out large numbers of his supporters on election day. He carried this momentum with him into the general election campaign. Though he had trailed Moseley-Braun by 5 points in the previous October, the race was a dead heat in the wake of the primary and remained that way well into the summer. In late September, Fitzgerald began to pull away, and had built a double digit lead by the end of October. He went on to win by a 50 percent to 47 percent margin.

Seeming to take note of George Ryan's success with the gun issue, Moseley-Braun attempted to sound the same themes against Fitzgerald. She, along with Democratic Party soft-money ads, hammered him for supporting concealed-carry permits and other pro-gun legislation in the Illinois legislature. Jim and Sarah Brady announced they would campaign for Moseley-Braun. Other Democratic ads criticized Fitzgerald on health care and emphasized the need for HMO reform; all of these attacks continued through late September.

Fitzgerald built his campaign around a few key themes: the incumbent's performance and integrity, his staunch opposition to taxes (he mentioned taxes in his first ad of the summer), and — beginning in early October — his (moderate) positions in favor of the Brady Bill, a patient's bill of rights, and even the Clean Air and Clean Water acts.

Illinois U.S. Senate Issue Salience

The Illinois Senate and Gubernatorial races offer an interesting natural experiment. Both races included the same voters, in the same year, in the same state. By holding all of those components constant and changing only the candidates (and attendant campaign messages), it is possible to examine how the same issue constituencies behave when exposed to different kinds of campaign message content.

The most important contrast between the two races was the role of the gun issue. While the gubernatorial race featured a loud, persistent and lopsided series of messages on guns, gun control was a relatively minor sub-theme in the Senate race. One side made a credible attack with the issue, and the other side made an equally credible response; the issue was far from center stage. Although gun control voters were slightly more supportive of Moseley-Braun than normal through the end of September (the attack phase), and slightly more supportive of Fitzgerald than normal beginning in early October (the response phase), *the gun control constituency never differed significantly from its normal partisan vote probability in the Senate race.* Similarly, among the crime constituency, although Fitzgerald's overperformance was significant, it remained in the single digits for almost the entire race. Until late October, Ryan's overperformance with this constituency tended to be at least double Fitzgerald's.

The tax issue provides another sharp contrast between the two races. Taxes were an important theme for Fitzgerald, but a relatively minor message for Ryan. Ryan only overperformed significantly with the tax constituency after he began advertising on the issue, and even then the overperformance ranged only from seven to twelve points. In the Senate race, Fitzgerald enjoyed a strongly significant (double-digit) overperformance with the tax constituency from the beginning of July. On election eve, Fitzgerald was overperforming a typical Republican candidate by 16 points with those concerned about taxes; this was more than double George Ryan's seven-point overperformance with the same voters.

Interestingly, Fitzgerald's overperformance with the taxes constituency didn't change much between July and election eve. Fitzgerald had been talking about taxes since early in the primary, and had even charged his Republican opponent with being a tax raiser. This is a case of an issue constituency being activated even before the general election campaign.

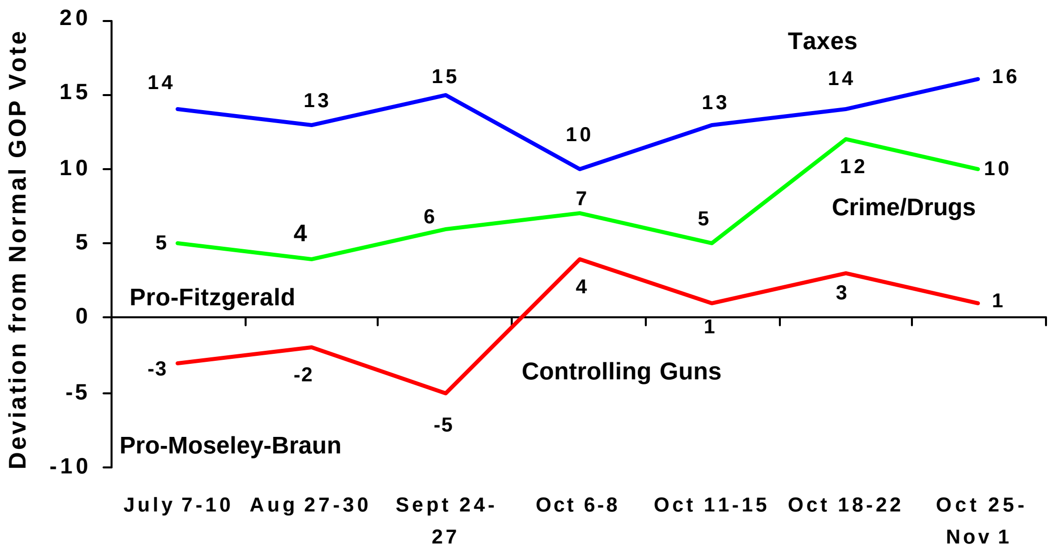
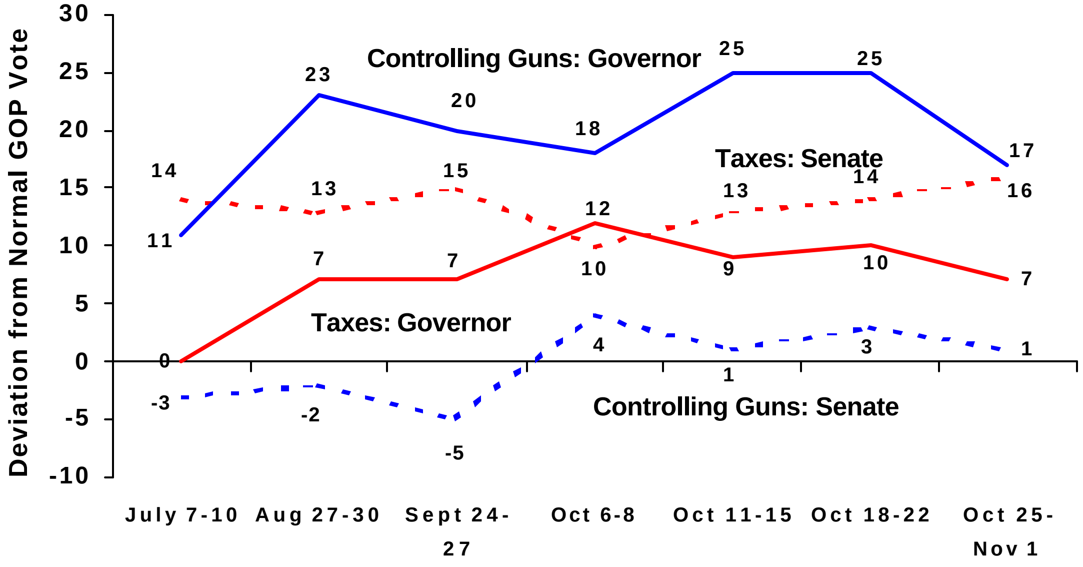


Figure 6-3
Issue Priming in Illinois 1998 U.S. Senate Race
Deviation from Normal Republican Vote by Issue Constituency

The 1998 Illinois races serve as an important natural experiment for the ability of campaign messages to move voters beyond a simple partisan vote pattern and instead make candidate choices which are more closely aligned with their own issue agendas. Those concerned about guns, crime and taxes were drawn away from their normal partisan vote pattern to a much greater degree when a race featured a clear champion of “their” issue than when it did not. Figure 6-4 summarizes this graphically. The gun control constituency sided with its champion to a much greater degree than normal, throughout the campaign period, in the gubernatorial race. This same constituency never differed from normal partisan preferences in the U.S.

Figure 6-4
1998 Illinois Governor versus Illinois U.S. Senate
Deviation from Normal Republican Vote by Issue Constituency



Senate contest, where the issue had no real champion. The taxes constituency sided with its champion to a much greater degree than normal, throughout the campaign period, in the U.S. Senate race. In the gubernatorial race, this issue had only a lukewarm champion; although the constituency eventually sided with that “champion” to a greater degree than normal, it was only after that candidate made taxes an issue — and, even then, the deviation was much smaller than in the Senate contest.

In 1998 Illinois, the issue-based campaign discourse clearly helped voters sort themselves out according to their disparate preferences and become more responsible in their choices across the ballot.

Table 6-5
Illinois 1998 U.S. Senate Election
Committed Republican Vote, Normal Republican Vote, and Deviation by Issue Constituency

	Total					
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	N=
July 7-10	49	47	2	2.0	.046	800
Aug 27-30	50	48	2	1.5	.137	800
Sept 24-27	52	48	4	2.2	.031	600
Oct 6-8	52	48	5	3.2	.001	600
Oct 11-15	52	47	5	3.8	.000	930
Oct 18-22	57	48	9	6.3	.000	880
Oct 25-Nov 1	54	48	7	6.4	.000	877

	Controlling Guns					Crime				
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig
July 7-10	39	42	-3	-1.0	.304	54	49	5	2.7	.008
Aug 27-30	40	41	-2	-0.2	.825	54	50	4	2.0	.046
Sept 24-27	39	44	-5	-1.3	.190	54	48	6	2.7	.007
Oct 6-8	43	38	4	1.4	.171	57	50	7	2.8	.005
Oct 11-15	43	42	1	0.4	.722	53	49	5	2.7	.008
Oct 18-22	42	39	3	1.2	.243	61	50	12	5.6	.000
Oct 25-Nov 1	42	40	1	0.6	.528	60	50	10	6.3	.000

	Education					Taxes				
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig
July 7-10	46	47	-1	-0.1	.895	72	57	14	5.0	.000
Aug 27-30	49	47	1	0.8	.402	71	58	13	5.2	.000
Sept 24-27	48	48	0	0.4	.697	75	61	15	6.2	.000
Oct 6-8	51	47	4	2.2	.031	69	59	10	3.1	.002
Oct 11-15	51	47	4	2.2	.028	74	60	13	5.7	.000
Oct 18-22	54	48	6	3.3	.001	71	57	14	5.9	.000
Oct 25-Nov 1	51	46	5	3.2	.001	74	58	16	7.4	.000

	Patient Rights					Environment				
Date	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig	Vote	Normal	Dif.	T-test	Sig
July 7-10	40	44	-4	-0.9	.386	49	47	2	0.4	.723
Aug 27-30	38	42	-4	-1.0	.312	44	51	-7	-1.4	.173
Sept 24-27	42	45	-2	-0.6	.565	51	48	3	0.1	.923
Oct 6-8	47	44	3	0.9	.362	49	44	6	1.3	.195
Oct 11-15	47	44	3	1.1	.278	47	42	5	1.0	.313
Oct 18-22	55	46	9	3.4	.001	51	45	6	1.1	.259
Oct 25-Nov 1	52	44	8	3.6	.000	47	45	2	0.6	.529

Missouri 1998 U.S. Senate Race

The natural experiment outlined in Illinois can be carried, to some extent, across state lines into Missouri. Although the states had different voters, and the identified issue constituencies were different, both states had competitive U.S. Senate races being carried out in the same national issue environment. The two states share a large media market (St. Louis), and some of the themes raised in Illinois were also raised in Missouri.

The issue agendas in the two states were also fairly similar. Two school-related issues topped the list: improving public education and "getting drugs and gangs out of the schools." A health care issue, "protecting patient rights and protecting Medicare," was also considered quite important. "Simplifying the IRS tax code and cutting taxes" was not far behind, followed by "combating crime and drugs." As in Illinois, environmental issues were at the bottom of the list. The wording of the health care item changed in early October; in the previous two surveys, it had been "Protecting patient rights in

Table 6-6
Percent of 1998 Missouri Voters Choosing Each Issue as Most or Second Most Important

	Improving Education	Getting drugs and gangs out of the schools	Combating crime and drugs	Simplifying the IRS tax code and cutting taxes	Protecting Patient Rights	Protecting the environment
June 17-22	46	44	30	31	22	15
Aug 25-30	38	46	32	37	29	10
Oct 6-10	37	39	30	31	44	11
Oct 11-17	41	42	25	34	39	9
Oct 18-22	42	44	24	33	38	10
Oct 25-29	45	44	21	34	37	11

Note: "Protecting Patient Rights" was "Protecting patient rights in health care plans" for the first two waves.
For October interviews, this item was worded as "Protecting patient rights and protecting Medicare."

health care plans.” This wording change is no doubt largely responsible for the substantial spike in importance given “patient rights” in October. The campaign itself does not appear to have had an agenda-setting effect. Apart from a slow and gradual decline in importance given “combating crime and drugs,” there were no other dramatic changes to the issue agenda between June and election eve.

Senator Christopher (“Kit”) Bond was standing for reelection to a third term. Before first winning election to the Senate in 1986, the moderately conservative Republican had served two terms as Missouri’s governor. Bond never lost a statewide election, but he did not have a history of landslide victories. He faced a competitive challenge from the state’s sitting Attorney General, Jay Nixon. Nixon, a fairly moderate Democrat, was considered a rising star in the party and had garnered considerable publicity as Attorney General. In particular, the recent tobacco settlement, which had been brokered by attorneys general, had produced an especially large volume of positive press coverage for Nixon. Neither man had faced serious opposition in the July primary elections.

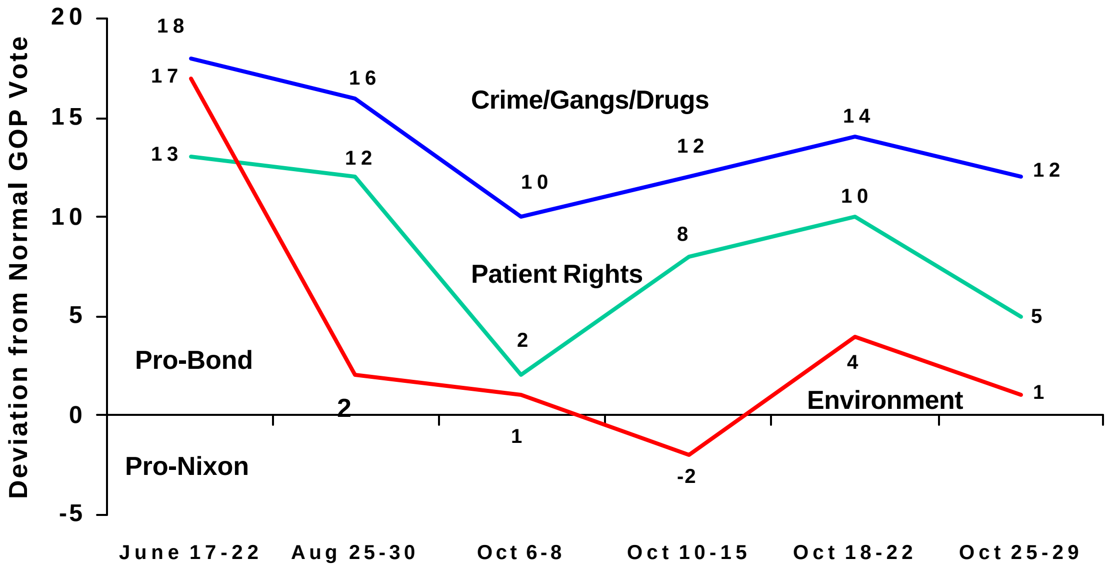
In the general election campaign, Bond focused on his accomplishments for Missouri in the U.S. Senate, his efforts to fight gangs and drugs in schools, and the problems with methamphetamine labs Jay Nixon had not addressed as Attorney General. Nixon fired back, in late August, with a defense of his record on crime — and featured a sheriff endorsement TV spot. Outside groups also weighed in; the Sierra Club ran a number of ads critical of Bond, early in the summer. Later in the year, the Democratic Party and AFL-CIO ran an ad campaign hitting Bond on the patient rights issue. An interesting ongoing side issue concerned African-American disaffection with Nixon; as Attorney General, Nixon had been responsible for carrying out the termination of an earlier school desegregation plan. By all accounts, Nixon was "just following orders" when he did this, but he suffered with black voters — and especially black leaders — all the same. Many civil rights organizations took a long time to endorse Nixon, if they endorsed him at all, and these groups seemed lukewarm at best about actively aiding Nixon's campaign.

The tone of campaign discourse ended up, in many regards, similar to the Senate race in Illinois: many jabs traded over a number of small issues, but without a single overriding theme (such as health care or gun control). Like in Illinois, the contest became to some degree a referendum on the incumbent — but unlike in Illinois, the incumbent in Missouri was generally well-liked and his performance well-regarded. Bond won by nine percentage points in November.

Missouri U.S. Senate Issue Salience

Figure 6-5 shows the trend to deviations from normal partisan voting among three issue constituencies which figured prominently in the campaign at one time or another: gangs and drugs in schools, patient rights, and the environment. The environmental issue is perhaps most interesting. In June, Bond was significantly overperforming with every issue constituency — even the heavily Democratic environmental protection voters. After the Sierra Club ran its anti-Bond advertising in early summer, however, this constituency's voting behavior never again differed significantly from normal.

Figure 6-5
Issue Priming in Missouri 1998 U.S. Senate Race
Deviation from Normal Republican Vote by Issue Constituency



The other significant Democratic message in the race was patient protection. Unfortunately, because the question wording changed in October, and this coincided with advertising by the Democratic Party and labor unions in the issue, the research methodology does not permit a reliable investigation of the trend over time. It seems clear that *something* happened in September and October to voters concerned about health care, however. Through August, Bond enjoyed double digit overperformance with this fairly Democratic constituency. In the wake of anti-Bond advertising on the issue, his overperformance dropped considerably. Though still a significant overperformance in mid and late October, the margin was much smaller than it had been over the summer. Like the Sierra Club independent expenditures, the health care hits did reduce Bond's overperformance with the constituency in question. Unlike the environmental advertising, however, the health care messages did not return this constituency all the way to normal partisan voting. And because Nixon did not have the resources (or will) to make health care the center of his campaign, the constituency behaved differently than it had in 1991 Pennsylvania.

Table 6-7
Missouri 1998 U.S. Senate Election
Committed Republican Vote, Normal Republican Vote, and Deviation by Issue Constituency

	Total					
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**N=**
June 17-22	66	50	16	9.2	.000	809
August 25-30	65	50	15	10.0	.000	801
Oct 6-8	58	50	8	4.7	.000	600
Oct 10-15	60	49	11	8.1	.000	1101
Oct 18-22	62	49	13	9.2	.000	1054
Oct 25-29	58	49	9	5.9	.000	878

	Combating Crime and Drugs					Drugs/Gangs out of Schools				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
June 17-22	67	52	16	5.6	.000	68	49	18	7.1	.000
August 25-30	71	52	18	7.2	.000	65	50	15	7.2	.000
Oct 6-8	62	53	9	2.7	.008	59	48	11	3.5	.000
Oct 10-15	64	51	12	4.6	.000	60	48	12	6.2	.000
Oct 18-22	66	54	12	4.3	.000	62	48	14	6.8	.000
Oct 25-29	63	53	10	3.5	.001	60	49	11	5.1	.000

	Education					Taxes				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
June 17-22	60	48	12	4.5	.000	72	56	17	5.7	.000
August 25-30	64	48	16	6.3	.000	73	56	17	7.4	.000
Oct 6-8	56	48	8	2.5	.014	73	58	15	5.9	.000
Oct 10-15	53	44	8	3.9	.000	72	58	13	6.2	.000
Oct 18-22	58	46	13	5.7	.000	72	58	15	7.1	.000
Oct 25-29	55	47	8	3.5	.001	68	56	12	5.2	.000

	Patient Rights					Environment				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
June 17-22	60	48	13	3.5	.001	61	44	17	3.1	.003
August 25-30	58	46	12	4.0	.000	47	44	2	0.6	.542
Oct 6-8	47	45	2	1.3	.199	43	42	1	0.1	.884
Oct 10-15	54	46	8	3.4	.001	44	45	-2	-0.2	.837
Oct 18-22	55	45	10	4.4	.000	47	43	4	1.1	.267
Oct 25-29	49	43	5	2.1	.034	44	43	1	0.6	.563

Combating crime and drugs, and getting gangs and drugs out of schools, by contrast, were two of Bond's more prominent themes. Included in these issues were the charges that Nixon had not done enough as Attorney General to crack down on methamphetamine labs. Bond significantly overperformed with both constituencies from start to finish. Because the overperformance margins were so similar, I combined the two constituencies for display purposes in the graph. The combined constituency includes anyone who named either or both issues as most or second-most important; the deviation from normal was always in double digits, and always highly significant.

Although the 1998 Missouri Senate race lacked an overriding issue on which the contest hinged, voters concerned about the three issues that *were* discussed tended to behave roughly as would be expected. Bond strongly overperformed with those concerned about crime, drugs, and gangs. Bond's overperformance was substantially weaker with those concerned about patient rights — especially after he was attacked on the issue. The implied message of the attack was that Nixon would be a better champion of patient rights than Kit Bond; importantly, voters concerned about patient rights then moved toward Nixon. Finally, the voting behavior of environmentalists was about normal — but only became normal after the Sierra Club weighed in with information about Bond's voting record in the U.S. Senate. Until then, Nixon greatly underperformed with this traditionally Democratic constituency. In all three instances, then, Missouri voters used the information they were given to behave in a more responsible manner.

Nevada 1998 Gubernatorial Race

The Nevada gubernatorial contest that year lacked the kind of partisan edge that featured more prominently in the races discussed up till now. Kenny Guinn, the Republican nominee, was a moderate businessman who focused on his managerial and administrative abilities rather than divisive partisan issues. Some even described him as a “Republican Bob Miller” (the outgoing two-term Democratic Governor). (Morrison, 1998a). His campaign emphasized his thirty-four years in Las Vegas as the head of Southwest Gas, superintendent of Clark County schools, and a banker. Most of Guinn’s charges against Democratic nominee Jan Jones, the mayor of Las Vegas, focused on ethics investigations that had been conducted against her — and on her poor attendance record at city council meetings. Jones was moderately liberal, and enjoyed the endorsement of traditional Democratic base groups such as teachers unions, the AFL-CIO, other labor unions, EMILY’s List, gay rights groups, and minorities. Because Guinn had served as superintendent of a the state’s largest school district, and because Jones had received the endorsement of the state’s largest teacher’s union, education inevitably arose as an issue — but neither candidate made education a centerpiece. Jones also put together a health care reform proposal; interestingly, at the second debate between the two candidates (on October 11th), both candidates agreed that these health proposals were good ones.

(Morrison, 1998b). In fact, in debates and in television advertising, the two candidates tended to spar relatively little over partisan issues; the discourse remained focused largely on Guinn's performance as head of Southwest Gas and Jones's record as Las Vegas mayor. Guinn won this "nonpartisan" contest by ten points.

As in the other states, public education was at the top of the issue agenda in 1998. Interestingly, however, "managing problems from population growth, like expanding roads" was consistently considered nearly as important. Combating crime and drugs was not far behind; taxes and health care formed the next tier of concerns. "Improving ethics in government" was considered least important.

Table 6-8
Percent of 1998 Nevada Voters Choosing Each Issue as Most or Second Most Important

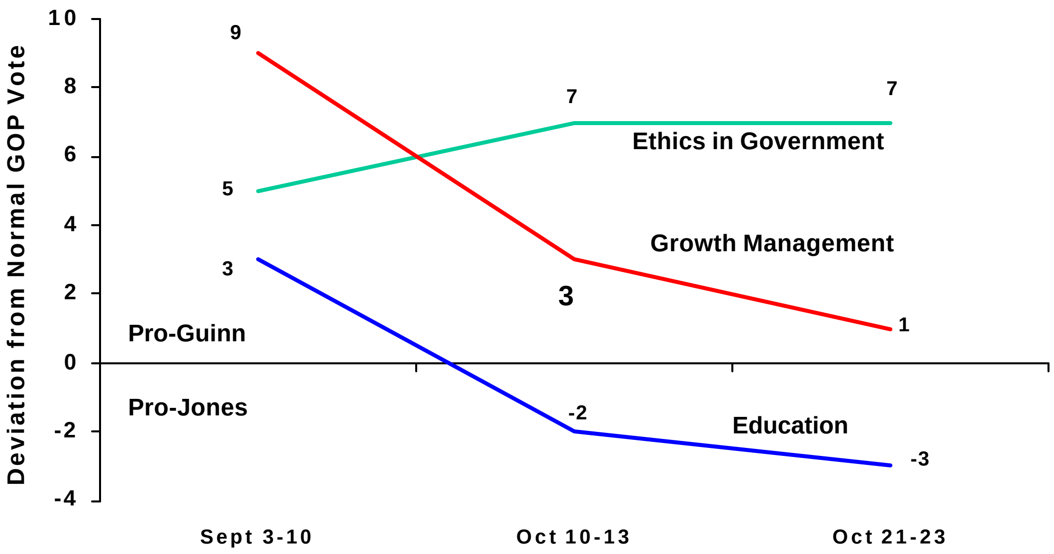
	Improving public education	Combating crime and drugs	Holding the line on state taxes and spending	Promoting affordable health care	Improving ethics-in-government	Managing problems from population growth
Sept 3-10	50	36	17	25	16	41
Oct 10-13	45	36	23	26	15	34
Oct 21-23	47	33	23	24	19	36

Before discussing the voting results, a brief methodological note is necessary. The Nevada data are unique because they include a validated vote. The initial survey interviews were conducted using a voter registration list. After the election, I visited or otherwise contacted all seventeen County Clerks and validated the general election and primary election votes of the survey respondents. (The details of this undertaking are documented in Blunt, 1999.) Because the current discussion focuses on the behavior of voters in rather specific issue constituencies, it seems appropriate to limit the following analysis to actual voters.

Nevada Gubernatorial Issue Salience

The three issues discussed with any regularity were education, ethics, and growth management, and Figure 6-6 shows the deviation from normal partisan voting over time for each of these constituencies. Neither candidate established a significant following, above and beyond what partisanship alone would predict, with voters concerned about education. Both had

Figure 6-6
Issue Priming in Nevada 1998 Gubernatorial Race
Deviation from Normal Republican Vote by Issue Constituency



Note: Results among actual, validated voters.

credible messages on the issue, but neither made it the centerpiece of the campaign. Although Guinn enjoyed a small advantage immediately following the primary election, and Jones built a small advantage in October, none of these deviations from normal voting was significant.

By contrast, Jones did inspire substantial movement on the growth management issue. Guinn’s initial lead with this constituency was initially 9 points greater than normal (and statistically significant), but by late October his overperformance had been whittled to a single point. Jones’s messages on growth management seem to have been successful in neutralizing Guinn’s lead in this area, returning this group to its normal partisan behavior.

Guinn built and maintained a solid, if not significant, overperformance among the ethics-in-government constituency. His messages about the state ethics probe of his opponent and her poor attendance at council meetings seem to have resonated with this reasonably small group of voters, and they supported him more than they would have a typical Republican.

Health care is an interesting case. The flurry of attention surrounding Jones’s proposals in early October seems to have given her a bounce with this constituency, but she was not able to maintain this overperformance in late October.

The Nevada gubernatorial election was unique among these six races because of its focus on managerial and administrative abilities and job experience. There was no defining partisan issue to the election, and the various issue constituencies seem to have responded predictably. None differed from their normal partisan vote patterns in late October, most probably because neither campaign had given them enough issue-based reasons to do so. In this case, the *lack* of issue-based discourse *prevented* the electorate from better-ordering its preferences and connecting issue concerns with vote choices.

Table 6-9
Nevada 1998 Gubernatorial Election: Actual, Validated Voters
Committed Republican Vote, Normal Republican Vote, and Deviation by Issue Constituency

	Total					
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**N=**
Sept 3-10	56	51	6	2.7	.013	464
Oct 10-13	53	52	1	0.6	.430	551
Oct 21-23	52	51	1	0.9	.904	553

	Ethics in Government					Managing population growth probs.				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
Sept 3-10	63	58	5	0.7	.475	58	49	9	2.8	.005
Oct 10-13	63	56	7	1.5	.133	54	51	3	0.8	.401
Oct 21-23	66	59	7	1.4	.175	53	51	1	0.3	.794

	Education					Taxes and Spending				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
Sept 3-10	52	49	3	1.3	.212	72	60	12	2.8	.006
Oct 10-13	46	48	-2	-0.7	.499	69	62	7	2.2	.028
Oct 21-23	45	48	-3	-0.9	.347	63	61	2	0.5	.619

	Health Care					Crime/Drugs				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
Sept 3-10	41	40	1	0.3	.754	59	53	7	2.0	.044
Oct 10-13	37	45	-7	-2.2	.033	60	53	6	1.9	.063
Oct 21-23	39	42	-3	-0.5	.638	54	53	1	0.5	.635

Nevada 1998 U.S. Senate Race

The final election contest is also the one with the closest result: Democratic incumbent Harry Reid won reelection to a third term in the U.S. Senate in 1998 by only 428 votes. Reid's challenger, Congressman John Ensign, had represented Las Vegas in the U.S. House for four years. Neither Ensign nor Reid was on the ideological fringe of his party. The son of a miner from the small town of Searchlight, on the campaign trail Reid emphasized his humble beginnings and argued that he understood the needs of ordinary Nevadans. He and allies ran numerous spots discussing health care, Social Security, and the environment. One of Reid's principal issues was fighting federal proposals to store nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain. Although Ensign also said he opposed waste storage at Yucca Mountain, Reid found and repeated older quotes from Ensign which seemed to show equivocation. The League of Conservation Voters and Sierra Club made substantial independent expenditures on Reid's behalf. Ensign's chief issue was taxes, with many of his television spots contrasting Reid's past support for tax increases with Ensign's firm opposition to taxes.

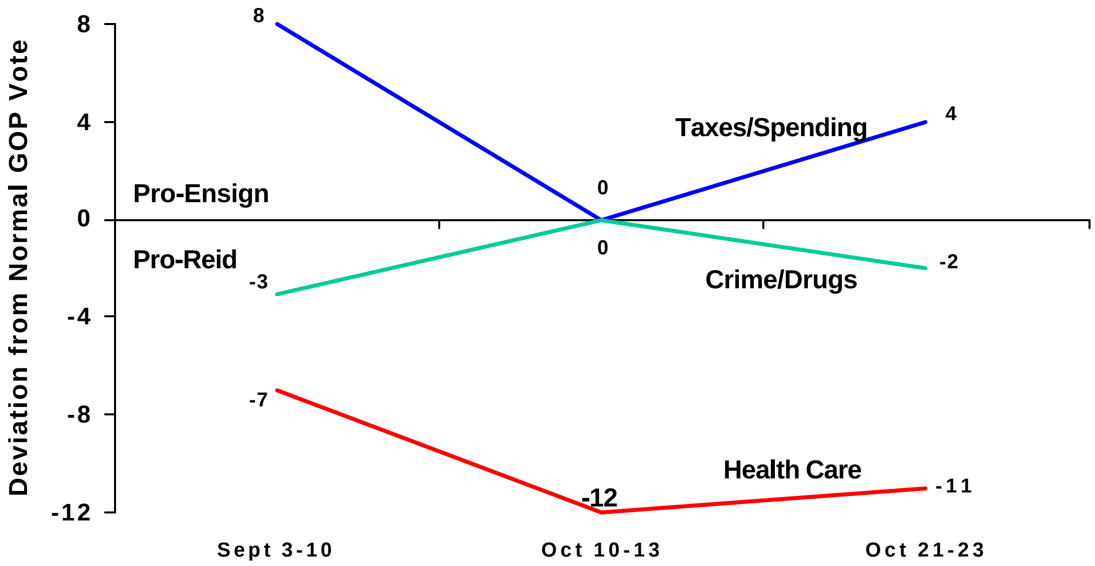
The issue constituency categories were designed with the gubernatorial race in mind; managing population growth was not raised at all in the Senate race, and ethics in government was only tangentially discussed. (Ensign had called on Clinton to resign in the wake of the Lewinsky scandal; Reid only condemned the President’s behavior, without mentioning resignation.) Unfortunately, neither environmental issues generally nor the Yucca Mountain issue in particular was included. As in Illinois, however, a natural experiment is possible. There should be little evidence of priming with the population growth and ethics-in-government constituencies — because these issues were not mentioned — but more priming visible for the health care and taxes/spending constituencies than in the gubernatorial contest.

Nevada U.S. Senate Issue Salience

In fact, Harry Reid did significantly overperform with the health care constituency from start to finish. He started out seven points above a normal Democrat, and increased this overperformance to double digits. Ensign overperformed with the taxes/spending constituency in September and in late October, but the overperformance was not as significant as Reid’s on health.

Ensign overperformed slightly with the ethics-in-government constituency, but not significantly so; this group was heavily Republican, and likely had Lewinsky on its mind. Reid overperformed a bit with the population growth constituency, but this was only significant in early October — and, in all cases, similar to his overperformance with the electorate as a whole.

Figure 6-7
Issue Priming in Nevada 1998 U.S. Senate Race
Deviation from Normal Republican Vote by Issue Constituency



Note: Results among actual, validated voters.

Although the issue constituency measurements are not as clean as I would like for this race, the available data do provide some confirmation of the findings earlier in the chapter: those who cared about the race’s dominant issues more or less supported the champion of those issues. When an issue was not discussed in the Senate race, voting behavior reverted to a more or less normal partisan pattern.

Table 6-10
Nevada 1998 U.S. Senate Election: Actual, Validated Voters
Committed Republican Vote, Normal Republican Vote, and Deviation by Issue Constituency

	Total					
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**N=**
Sept 3-10	48	51	-3	-1.5	.135	464
Oct 10-13	48	52	-4	-2.3	.021	551
Oct 21-23	48	51	-3	-1.7	.089	553

	Ethics in Government					Managing population growth probs.				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
Sept 3-10	65	58	7	1.8	.070	48	49	0	0.2	.837
Oct 10-13	58	56	2	0.2	.838	45	51	-6	-2.4	.018
Oct 21-23	63	59	4	0.9	.372	47	51	-4	-1.7	.083

	Education					Taxes and Spending				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
Sept 3-10	42	49	-7	-2.5	.012	68	60	8	1.9	.058
Oct 10-13	39	48	-9	-3.4	.001	62	62	0	0.1	.950
Oct 21-23	44	48	-4	-1.4	.153	65	61	4	1.7	.093

	Health Care					Crime/Drugs				
Date	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**	**Vote**	**Normal**	**Dif.**	**T-test**	**Sig**
Sept 3-10	32	40	-7	-2.1	.037	49	53	-3	-0.9	.392
Oct 10-13	33	45	-12	-3.4	.001	53	53	0	-0.1	.912
Oct 21-23	31	42	-11	-2.9	.005	51	53	-2	-0.8	.445

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that voters have specific issue concerns, and campaign information helps them make candidate choices which are more consistent with those concerns and less closely tied to partisanship alone. When a candidate champions a particular issue, and pledges to make it his top concern in office, the constituents of that issue deviate from their normal partisan inclinations — sometimes to a very dramatic degree — to support that candidate. These priming effects are most clearly pronounced when a single issue or two becomes the defining matter of the contest; health care in Pennsylvania and gun control in Illinois are especially good illustrations of this.

When, by contrast, an election contest's issue focus is more diffuse, voters seem less inclined to deviate from their normal partisan preferences. Still, although the issue constituencies in question are less prone to move beyond partisan vote patterns in these cases, some effects often remain visible.

In other instances, certain (more homogeneous) constituencies only need be told of candidate priorities to be moved significantly from normal or returned from an "irrational" abnormal vote pattern to one more in line with its normal partisanship. The environmental constituency in Missouri is an excellent example of the latter, with the tax constituency in the Illinois gubernatorial race an example of the former.

In none of the four states did these data uncover significant agenda setting effects; issue agendas in each state tended to remain quite stable over the course of the entire campaign period. Voters seem resistant to outright manipulation; they have firm priorities, and campaign advertising on different issues seems to do little to change these priorities. Even in Pennsylvania, where health care dominated campaign discourse, the proportion citing health care as important didn't budge. The same was true of gun control in Illinois and growth management in Nevada.

Early in the chapter, I contended that observing any of three effects would indicate that campaign-generated information about the candidates' issue agendas had helped make a given electorate more responsible in its voting behavior: (1) When a new issue is championed, that issue's constituency shifts in favor of the champion — or, when discussion of an existing issue is silenced, the constituency reverts to normal voting; (2) Persistent deviation from normal voting among constituents of a consistently-championed issue; (3) The same constituency in the same state behaves differently in races with differing issue emphases.

The data analysis has provided considerable evidence of all three types of campaign-generated changes in voting behavior. Above all, the analysis shows that voters can and do often respond quite responsibly when provided with campaign information about candidates' issue priorities. As Table 6-11 summarizes, in nearly every race a new issue was introduced at some point, and constituents of that issue shifted significantly in favor of "their" issue's champion[54]. Voters may give only selective attention to campaign discourse, but do appear to have antennae up and be listening for information about which candidates share their issue priorities. When a candidate brings up a new issue, voters concerned about that issue are often quick to lend their support. Similarly, in cases where a particular candidate champions a particular issue from start to finish, voters concerned about that issue tend to give the candidate consistently better-than-normal support.

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[54] The inverse happened in Nevada: John Ensign inspired significant deviation from normal voting among those concerned about ethics in government *when he talked about the issue,* but when he stopped discussing it, those concerned about ethics reverted to normal voting.

Table 6-11
Summary of Issue Salience Effects Across Races

		Effect		
State	**Race**	**New Issue/ Silencing Issue Causes Shift**	**Consistant Champion, Consistant Impact**	**Same constituency behaves differently in different offices**
PA	Senate	Health Care	Crime, Taxes	N/A
IL	Governor	Health, Environment	Guns	Guns, Taxes
	Senate		Taxes	
MO	Senate	Environment, Patient Rights	Crime	N/A
NV	Governor	Growth management		Health Care, Growth Management
	Senate	Ethics	Health Care	

Finally, the two “natural experiments” (Illinois and Nevada) provide an important look at how voters in the same constituency react differently to the issue discourses in different contests. Gun control had a clear and consistent champion in the Illinois gubernatorial race but not in the U.S. Senate race; those concerned about guns sided with the gubernatorial champion by a wide margin — but reverted to normal partisan voting in the Senate race. In the Senate race, by contrast, those concerned about taxes had a clear and persistent champion in the Senate race; their advocate in the gubernatorial contest was less clear. As a result, deviations from normal partisan voting were much smaller.

Voters can only make consistent choices if they are armed with enough of the right kind of information. Without campaign activity to guide them, voters often choose in an inconsistent and idiosyncratic manner. When candidates provide information about their priorities, voters respond and a more responsible electorate emerges.

CHAPTER 7

CANDIDATE-CENTERED COALITIONS

Campaign activity is intended by candidates to be a means of winning an election. No doubt campaign activity does exercise some influence over election outcomes, but I have argued repeatedly that it serves a very important collateral function regardless: the information generated by candidate messages helps voters order their preferences and make candidate choices which are more in accord with those preferences.

The dissertation contends that campaigns have social consequences which can be important than the election day total vote count. Even if the overall division of the vote remains steady between April and November, very important changes in the *structure* and *ordering* of the vote may have occurred over those intervening months. For example, a given candidate's coalition may have initially been disproportionately composed of suburbanites and younger white women; after the campaign process created a more fully informed electorate, his coalition may have become more rural and more male. This chapter will examine in depth the ability of subpresidential campaigns to assemble coalitions, with a particular focus on how voters *assemble themselves* in coalitions differently as a result of exposure to campaign messages.

Coalitions built and inspired during a campaign can have important consequences for how the state is governed after a campaign — regardless of which candidate is elected. Guided by campaign information, like-minded people join together and coalesce their support behind a particular "champion" who speaks for them. For example, union members are reminded that their concerns are important to those in public life, and will be in a more united posture when labor issues are addressed by state government. Even if "their" candidate lost the election for governor, union members will speak with a stronger voice during the governing period as a result of gaining that united voice during the campaign period. The same is often true for hunters and firearms enthusiasts. The campaign process identifies friends and enemies, and builds a sense of common purpose among voters concerned about additional regulations. That unity will have consequences even after the election — even if the NRA-backed candidate loses the race for Governor — when state government considers gun legislation and officials hear from these concerned constituents.

Campaigns themselves seldom target demographic groups *per se*. Rather, campaigns seek to capitalize on issues and themes which resonate to their own advantage with a strong majority of the electorate. The ideal issue or theme not only reinforces one's base, but also expands one's base by building support with groups initially skeptical or lukewarm about the candidate. The campaign has no altruistic motive in selecting these issues, but their promulgation does provide important information to those who are most in need of it. This information helps those groups who otherwise would be uninformed order their preferences and make candidate choices more in line with those preferences.

As Chapter 2 detailed, the consultants who serve campaigns have a number of tools at their disposal for identifying these issues and themes. The ideal issues are, in the words of one political consultant, “eighty percenters” — that is, issues or themes on which a large majority of the electorate sides with one candidate rather than the other. Because such themes have such wide appeal, they necessarily reach out to a wider audience than one’s core constituency. Candidates of each party have some groups with which they have a natural initial advantage, because of the party identification (evidenced in the normal vote) of that group. For Democrats, for example, who start with a natural advantage with women and minorities, a winning issue or theme might appeal to those groups *but also* appeal to large numbers of men. For Republicans, who have a natural advantage with men and those in rural areas, a winning theme would *also* appeal to women and city dwellers.

Social group differences are important, but seldom are they important in and of themselves. They are important because people who share, for example, the same ethnicity, the same religion, the same age and gender, or the same geographical residence often tend to have similar values — or particular values may be especially in evidence with a certain group. These values can often have serious ramifications for a group's political preferences.

Targeting campaign messages is a complex process. Direct mail can be used to reach highly specialized constituencies with messages designed especially for them — or with messages deemed too controversial for general consumption. Outside interest groups are especially likely to engage in such activities; members of the Sierra Club, the National Rifle Association, and other such organizations often receive detailed endorsement letters in the weeks leading up to an election.

The bulk of the dollars a campaign organization itself spends will be used to purchase television and radio advertising. Mass media advertising eventually reaches a broad cross-section of the electorate, but even here it is possible to do some targeting. Apart from geography (which is entirely a function of the media market on which advertising time is purchased), the primary characteristics used for targeting mass media messages are gender, age, and ethnicity. These are the characteristics around which the A.C. Nielsen company builds its audience profiles of various television programs.

When a campaign has identified an issue with appeal to groups with which it is underperforming, media consultants can use Nielsen ratings to skew the television buy to include more programs watched by those groups of special concern. The core groups should only have to see the advertisement a few times to get the message and internalize it. The initially hostile groups, by contrast, will have a greater amount of innate resistance to be overcome. As a result, those initially hostile groups will need greater exposure to the message before it can be internalized and acted upon. Suppose, for example, that Democrats have identified an issue which shores up their base but also resonates with older men. The media consultant might disproportionately advertise this issue on programs, such as sports broadcasts, disproportionately watched by older men. Because older men are more innately hostile to Democratic-sponsored messages, they will require this additional exposure to help overcome that resistance.

This chapter investigates the degree to which campaign activity communicates the information voters need to assemble themselves responsibly into coalitions supporting various candidates. The analysis looks beyond the issue priorities *per se,* which were discussed in the previous chapter, and examines *the degree to which campaign information is able to alter the general composition of a candidate's base of support.*

Data and Methodology

A natural experimental approach often yields the greatest insights into voting behavior, because it controls (holds constant) so many potentially confounding factors and unobtrusively manipulates a small number of variables which are especially relevant. Political context matters greatly when studying voting behavior; because electorates in different states are immersed in entirely different political milieux, with entirely different candidates, it is difficult to conduct a reliable experiment which crosses state lines. The analysis of this chapter will therefore focus on a single state which, because of the nature and timing of recent races run within it, offers a number of important natural experiments.

Illinois is a nearly ideal state in this regard. Illinois statewide races occur in off-Presidential years, offering a cleaner information environment. Overall, the state leans slightly Democratic, but both Republicans and Democrats have won statewide elections in recent years. The last two election cycles have featured a wide variety of races with good mix of campaign messages and candidate styles (the key independent variables to manipulate). In just two cycles (1994 and 1998), Illinois offers examples of: a hard-fought U.S. Senate race centered on traditionally partisan themes, a hard-fought gubernatorial race where many partisan themes were reversed, a high-information race for attorney general with many partisan themes, and a landslide gubernatorial victory based on traditionally partisan issues. By way of control, each year featured one downballot race which was a cakewalk for an incumbent and generated little campaign activity (apart from glowingly-positive messages from the incumbent about his job performance).

The key research question is the degree to which the content of each campaign's messages led to distinct patterns of voting behavior on the part of identifiable social groups in the Illinois electorate. The analysis will follow two lines of inquiry to judge the impact of campaign activity on the voting behavior of social groups:

1. Comparing the ultimate, election-eve voting behavior of key social groups to the voting behavior of those same groups in the same race much earlier in the year.
2. Comparing the ultimate, election-eve voting behavior of key social groups across different races — which had featured different messages — in the same year.

To best maintain an experimental design, the analysis will be presented for 1994 and then replicated for 1998. For each year, the first section of the analysis will compare, for each race, the voting behavior of key social groups on election eve to the voting behavior of those same groups much earlier in the year (before the start of the general election campaign). In each case, I will describe the targeting efforts of the campaign and the substantive issue content of the messages. The heart of the analysis will center on a table with rows for each of the key strategic voting groups. The table will show, for each group, the Republican share of the vote early in the year, on election eve, and the change; it will also show the group's deviation from normal partisan voting early in the year, on election eve, and the change. Especially sizable changes in voting behavior will be noted and discussed.

After examining all three of the races in a particular year, I will compare the election eve coalitions which each Republican candidate assembled. Each candidate's coalition will be compared both to the other two candidates' coalitions and to the *normal* coalition that would have been assembled had each group simply voted on the strength of its partisanship. I will then evaluate the degree to which observed coalition differences correspond with objective differences in the messages produced by each of the three campaigns.

Types of Races, Types of Coalitions

There should be three distinct patterns in coalition formation. All are tied closely to the nature of the campaign information generated, and provide important insights into how electorates respond to this information. The three types are as follows:

1. **The Landslide.** Some races start off competitive, but the introduction of certain information completely discredits one of the candidates. This should result in a rising tide which largely swamps differences between groups. (Governor 1994).
2. **The Cakewalk.** In some cases, an incumbent downballot officeholder inspires little serious opposition. The opponent spends little money, engages in little campaign activity, leaving the incumbent to run an entirely positive campaign, free from cross-cutting partisan issues, touting his performance in office. Because there is no countervailing campaign acting upon them as they make up their minds, the result should be disproportionately large increases, over time, among a wide variety of groups usually inclined to support the other party. (Secretary of State, 1994; Attorney General, 1994).

3. **The Partisan Duel.** The three relatively high-information races featuring more traditionally partisan themes ought to have the most interesting effects on social group coalitions. There should be considerable changes in group voting behavior, and these changes should be connected to the information content of the races. If an issue of special concern to women was featured in one race, while an issue especially important to men was prominent in a different race, there should not only be substantial changes over time in the voting behavior of men and women; there should also be striking gender differences in the composition of each candidate's ultimate coalition. (Attorney General, 1994; U.S. Senate, 1998; Governor, 1998).

The Illinois Electorate

As noted above, most campaign targeting decisions are made on the basis of geography, ethnicity, gender, age, or some combination of these characteristics. The analysis will therefore examine these characteristics in investigating the formation of candidate coalitions.

There are five distinct political regions within Illinois: the city of Chicago, the suburban balance of Cook County, the five suburban collar counties[55] which ring Cook, the northern rural "downstate" counties, and the rural counties in the far southern portion of the state. The region lines were drawn with past voting behavior of the given counties in mind. The city of Chicago is heavily Democratic, Suburban Cook and the South lean Democratic, with the Collar and North being solidly Republican. As noted, these are *political* regions, based on past voting behavior. *Culturally,* however, the three Chicagoland regions are together often quite distinct from both of the downstate regions together. Both downstate regions are heavily rural and largely white. The Chicagoland area is metropolitan and has a diverse population. Depending on the focus of a given campaign, these cultural differences can cut across traditional political inclinations. At times, therefore, the analysis will combine all three of the Chicagoland regions and compare them to the two downstate regions together.

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[55] DuPage, Kane, Lake, Will, and McHenry Counties comprise the Collar.

Gender is, of course, an important category in itself. I will also investigate gender within region and age within gender; depending on the issue or focus of a campaign, messages may resonate differently with, for example, downstate men than with Chicagoland women — or with older men than with younger women.

Just like the American electorate as a whole, race and ethnicity remain important divisions within the Illinois electorate, with racial minorities (particularly blacks) tending to be heavily Democratic and the whites tending to be somewhat Republican. In American politics generally, because blacks of all ages and both genders tend to identify so strongly with the Democratic party, minority status *per se* presents a very strong resistance to Republican-sponsored messages. In this regard, minority status can be thought of as a "trump." An older black man, for example, who might otherwise be receptive to a particular message (if he was not a minority) will be significantly slower to respond or be moved by it once he learns it is Republican-sponsored. In other words, race trumps gender and age. For this reason, in the analysis, I will investigate the voting behavior of minorities all together rather than broken out with the other age, gender, and geography groups. When breaking out age, gender, and geography groups in analysis tables, those groups will include only white voters. The minorities will be shown separately.

The 1994 Races

The three 1994 races of interest were for Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State. The first two of these have been described in detail in earlier chapters, but I will briefly review each of them in this chapter. I will describe the substance of each race's campaign discourse, and the demographic groups which were of concern early in the year, then examine the impact of the ensuing campaign activity on the allegiances of all the key demographic groups.

Governor

In the gubernatorial contest, incumbent Republican Jim Edgar won reelection in a landslide over Democrat Dawn Clark Netsch — but in April, in the wake of the primary, Edgar had only 53 percent of the committed vote. In the April benchmark poll, Edgar was only three points above normal with white women, and just one point above normal with white women[56] in Chicagoland; he was seven points above normal with white men. The campaign sought to win big with all voters, of course, but wanted to make sure that whatever issues it selected would also resonate with women.

In the April benchmark poll, after being given arguments on both sides of Netsch's proposal to restructure the tax system and the way education was funded, 50 percent said they would be more likely to support Edgar and 38 percent said they would be more likely to support Netsch; men and women were nearly indistinguishable. After being told of Netsch's votes on crime, however, 75 percent said they would be less likely to vote for her and just 15 percent said they would be more likely to do so; again, men and women were virtually indistinguishable. It was difficult to identify a single subgroup with which the crime message did not resonate strongly in Edgar's favor. Not surprisingly, the Edgar campaign focused the greater number of messages on crime and the death penalty. As described in Chapter 2, the campaign's emphasis on crime quickly opened up a large lead for Edgar, and he went on to win in a thirty-point landslide on election day.

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[56] In all of this chapter's remaining analysis, unless otherwise noted, strategic subgroups mentioned include white voters only. For simplicity's sake, however, I will not always repeat the word "white" in the discussion. The discussion will sometimes refer to "men" and sometimes refer to "white men," but the reader should keep in mind that *white men is meant by this in both cases.*

Table 7-1 shows why the term “landslide” is an appropriate description for what the Edgar campaign achieved. Between April and election eve, Edgar increased his share of the vote by double digits among every strategic subgroup of interest. In April, Edgar overperformed by only a single digit margin with nearly every group, and actually underperformed by three points among Chicago whites. On election eve, his overperformance was at least 20 points with nearly every group, and even Chicago whites (one of Netsch’s core constituencies) now represented a seven point overperformance. In fact,

Table 7-1
Illinois 1994 Changes in Gubernatorial Subgroup Voting

	Normal Vote		Jim Edgar Vote			Deviation from Normal		
	April	Election Eve	April	Election Eve	Change	April	Election Eve	Change
Total	48.1	48.3	53.4	70.7	17.3	5.3	22.4	17.1
White	53.2	53.7	58.2	76.4	18.2	5.0	22.7	17.7
Black	16.3	16.9	24.1	37.2	13.1	7.8	20.3	12.5
Other	46.9	46.2	57.6	67.5	10.0	10.7	21.3	10.6
Region (Whites)								
Chicago	44.3	48.1	41.5	55.0	13.5	-2.7	6.9	9.7
Suburban Cook	54.4	54.7	59.0	76.1	17.1	4.5	21.3	16.8
Collar Counties	57.7	57.0	66.4	79.2	12.8	8.7	22.2	13.5
North	55.3	55.2	62.7	82.1	19.5	7.4	27.0	19.6
South	50.1	49.6	53.6	76.8	23.2	3.6	27.3	23.7
Non-White	24.0	27.3	32.5	48.2	15.8	8.4	20.9	12.5
Collapsed Region (Whites)								
Chicagoland	52.9	54.1	56.8	72.7	15.9	4.0	18.6	14.6
Downstate	53.3	53.1	59.5	80.2	20.8	6.1	27.1	21.0
Gender (Whites)								
Men	54.3	53.8	61.3	76.9	15.7	7.0	23.1	16.2
Women	52.0	53.5	55.1	75.3	20.3	3.1	21.8	18.7
Age/Gender (Whites)								
Men under 40	52.8	55.9	59.3	78.7	19.4	6.5	22.8	16.2
Men 40+	55.5	52.2	62.5	76.1	13.6	7.0	23.8	16.9
Women <40	51.9	52.9	52.9	70.5	17.6	1.0	17.7	16.7
Women 40+	51.9	53.8	56.3	77.8	21.5	4.4	24.0	19.6
Region/Gender (Whites)								
Chicagoland Men	53.7	55.4	61.1	72.7	11.6	7.3	17.4	10.0
Chicagoland Women	52.1	53.0	53.0	72.7	19.7	.9	19.7	18.8
Downstate Men	55.2	52.0	61.6	82.0	20.4	6.4	30.1	23.7
Downstate Women	51.9	54.2	57.8	78.4	20.7	5.9	24.3	18.3

Source: Statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. April 7-12, 1994 (N=800) and October 30-November 6, 1994 (N=1070).

Chicago whites were the only group with whom Netsch was even close to performing as well as a normal Democrat should.

Secretary of State

The race for Secretary of State also ended up a blowout, but it got to that result by a different route. Republican incumbent George Ryan faced only minimal opposition from state Treasurer Pat Quinn. Earlier in the year, it was thought that Quinn — who, after all, had successfully won statewide office — would present a formidable challenge to Ryan. As it turned out, however, Quinn spent considerable time and money on a losing effort to put a term limits referendum on the ballot, and never waged much of a campaign against Ryan. Ryan took the high road and concentrated on his accomplishments in office and never had to confront Quinn. Quinn's attacks were limited to press conferences and two television spots. (Hardy 1994b). Ryan coasted to a 61 percent to 38 percent victory.

Like Edgar, Ryan had not been in especially strong shape in April; he won only 54 percent of the committed vote, and the only region in which he overperformed at that time was the North. Ryan's home is Kankakee, in the North, and as Secretary of State he would have been quite well known in the Springfield market (also in the North). It is not surprising, therefore, for his overperformance to have been especially strong in this region. He slightly underperformed with whites in suburban Cook, and tended to do better with younger voters — both male and female — than with those aged 40+. Ryan initially underperformed with Chicagoland men, but did quite well with men downstate; there was no regional performance difference among women.

The ensuing campaign swamped many of these initial differences. By election eve, Ryan's overperformance with Chicagoland men almost matched his overperformance with men downstate, and downstate women moved especially far in his direction. Ryan gained considerable ground in Chicagoland generally, and by election eve was doing almost as well

Table 7-2
Illinois 1994 Changes in Subgroup Secretary of State Voting

	Normal Vote		George Ryan Vote			Deviation from Normal		
	April	Election Eve	April	Election Eve	Change	April	Election Eve	Change
Total	48.1	48.3	53.8	62.8	9.0	5.7	14.5	8.8
White	53.2	53.7	58.3	68.9	10.6	5.1	15.2	10.0
Black	16.3	16.9	29.4	33.8	4.4	13.0	16.9	3.9
Other	46.9	46.2	49.1	53.4	4.3	2.2	7.2	5.0
Region (Whites)								
Chicago	44.3	48.1	45.5	59.2	13.8	1.2	11.2	10.0
Suburban Cook	54.4	54.7	53.6	68.6	15.0	-.8	13.9	14.7
Collar Counties	57.7	57.0	64.1	72.9	8.8	6.4	15.9	9.4
North	55.3	55.2	66.5	78.3	11.8	11.2	23.1	12.0
South	50.1	49.6	53.1	55.0	1.9	3.1	5.4	2.4
Non-White	24.0	27.3	33.7	40.2	6.4	9.7	12.9	3.2
Collapsed Region (Whites)								
Chicagoland	52.9	54.1	55.5	68.1	12.6	2.6	14.0	11.4
Downstate	53.3	53.1	61.6	70.1	8.5	8.3	17.0	8.7
Gender (Whites)								
Men	54.3	53.8	57.9	66.4	8.5	3.6	12.6	9.0
Women	52.0	53.5	58.2	71.6	13.4	6.2	18.1	11.8
Age/Gender (Whites)								
Men under 40	52.8	55.9	59.1	73.0	13.9	6.3	17.1	10.8
Men 40+	55.5	52.2	55.9	62.9	6.9	.4	10.6	10.2
Women <40	51.9	52.9	67.5	74.5	7.0	15.6	21.7	6.1
Women 40+	51.9	53.8	52.3	69.4	17.0	.4	15.6	15.2
Region/Gender (Whites)								
Chicagoland Men	53.7	55.4	52.4	66.9	14.6	-1.4	11.6	13.0
Chicagoland Women	52.1	53.0	58.6	69.2	10.6	6.6	16.2	9.7
Downstate Men	55.2	52.0	67.0	65.8	-1.2	11.7	13.8	2.1
Downstate Women	51.9	54.2	57.7	74.3	16.6	5.8	20.2	14.3

Source: Statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. April 7-12, 1994 (N=800) and October 30-November 6, 1994 (N=1070).

(compared to a normal Republican) as he was downstate. The only region that remained largely unchanged was the South, where I suspect (but do not know for certain) that very little advertising was run in this race.

Generally speaking, over the course of the campaign, George Ryan increased by the largest margin (compared to a normal Republican) with groups having the weakest normal Republican inclination: women, especially older women and downstate women, and Chicagoland whites. His increases were smallest with groups such as downstate men, who have the strongest normal Republican inclination. The reason for this is that Ryan was already overperforming by a wide margin with the stronger Republican groups in April; the less-Republican groups needed the most information about him. Without countervailing messages from Pat Quinn, these groups responded positively to the one-sided pro-Ryan information environment. Ryan's cakewalk served to form a consensus around his reelection among a wide variety of groups.

Attorney General

The 1994 Attorney General race was the only one both centered on traditional partisan themes and competitive up until election day. DuPage County state's attorney Jim Ryan[57] and Chicago Democratic trial lawyer Al

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[57] Jim Ryan and George Ryan are not related.

Hofeld competed for this open seat. In April, Ryan had only 53 percent of the committed vote, and he most overperformed in his home region (the Collar). He underperformed in suburban Cook; overall, his performance compared to normal was about the same in Chicagoland as it was downstate. Ryan overperformed a little more with men than with women.

Over the course of the campaign, Hofeld spent approximately $5 million, including $4.2 million of his personal wealth, on the race; Ryan spent approximately $1 million. This differential in spending itself became an issue, with many Republicans charging Hofeld with trying to “buy” the election.

The two most prominent partisan issues were abortion and crime. Hofeld hammered Ryan over the Republican’s opposition to abortion even in cases of rape and incest, running numerous television and radio spots in the Chicago market emphasizing this theme. Ryan emphasized his experience as a prosecutor, arguing that he would be tougher on crime. Ryan had a credible message in this area, and the prominence of crime issues in the gubernatorial race certainly enhanced the salience of crime as a voting consideration generally. Hofeld attacked Ryan’s record as a prosecutor, and portrayed himself as an experienced courtroom advocate who would stand up for consumers as well as going after criminals. (Hardy 1994b). In the end, Ryan won by 54 percent to 44 percent.

Hofeld's strategy of attacking Ryan on abortion in the Chicago market made sense strategically. Among whites, in Chicagoland in 1994, nearly half (48 percent) of the voters described themselves as pro-choice; only 26 percent called themselves pro-life. Downstate, however, the plurality was reversed: the pro-life label enjoyed a 41 percent to 34 percent advantage over the pro-choice label. Pro-life groups did work on behalf of Ryan, getting the word out to their side largely through direct mail. Despite abortion usually being considered a "woman's issue," among whites there was little difference in abortion attitude by gender; white men called themselves pro-choice by a 39 percent to 31 percent margin, while white women did so by 42 percent to 36 percent.

Voters seem to have responded in a meaningful way to the content of the campaign discourse. Ryan's overperformance increased by only one point in Chicagoland between April and election eve; this is likely due at least in part to Hofeld's attacks on Ryan's abortion position.[58] However, the abortion issue likely helped Ryan downstate. Outside Chicagoland, Ryan's overperformance (compared to a normal Republican) increased from +5 to +15.

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[58] Ideally, it would be possible to examine abortion self-identification data in both April and November; Hofeld should have increased substantially with pro-choice voters, while Ryan should have had his biggest increases with pro-lifers. This is a case, however, where cost considerations cut a question from the surveys later in the year; the abortion self-id labels were only available in April. Inferences about how the abortion issue played out can only be made in reference to other social groups' feelings about abortion.

Table 7-3
Illinois 1994 Changes in Subgroup Attorney General Voting

	Normal Vote		Jim Ryan Vote			Deviation from Normal		
	April	**Election Eve**	**April**	**Election Eve**	**Change**	**April**	**Election Eve**	**Change**
Total	48.1	48.3	53.4	58.4	5.0	5.3	10.1	4.8
White	53.2	53.7	59.1	64.3	5.2	6.0	10.6	4.6
Black	16.3	16.9	15.4	29.0	13.6	-.9	12.2	13.1
Other	46.9	46.2	62.6	49.7	-12.9	15.7	3.4	-12.2
Region (Whites)								
Chicago	44.3	48.1	51.1	51.0	-.1	6.8	2.9	-3.9
Suburban Cook	54.4	54.7	52.3	61.7	9.3	-2.1	6.9	9.0
Collar Counties	57.7	57.0	71.3	66.8	-4.5	13.7	9.8	-3.9
North	55.3	55.2	63.9	71.6	7.7	8.6	16.4	7.9
South	50.1	49.6	49.3	62.2	12.9	-.7	12.6	13.4
Non-White	24.0	27.3	26.2	36.1	9.9	2.2	8.8	6.7
Collapsed Region (Whites)								
Chicagoland	52.9	54.1	58.9	61.4	2.4	6.1	7.2	1.2
Downstate	53.3	53.1	58.7	68.1	9.3	5.4	14.9	9.5
Gender (Whites)								
Men	54.3	53.8	62.3	64.3	2.0	7.9	10.5	2.5
Women	52.0	53.5	55.7	64.4	8.7	3.8	10.9	7.2
Age/Gender (Whites)								
Men under 40	52.8	55.9	60.4	64.8	4.4	7.6	8.9	1.2
Men 40+	55.5	52.2	63.9	63.6	-.3	8.3	11.4	3.0
Women <40	51.9	52.9	57.4	66.7	9.2	5.5	13.8	8.3
Women 40+	51.9	53.8	54.2	63.1	8.9	2.3	9.4	7.1
Region/Gender (Whites)								
Chicagoland Men	53.7	55.4	61.6	60.7	-.9	7.9	5.3	-2.6
Chicagoland Women	52.1	53.0	56.3	62.0	5.8	4.2	9.0	4.8
Downstate Men	55.2	52.0	63.3	68.9	5.6	8.0	16.9	8.8
Downstate Women	51.9	54.2	55.0	67.3	12.3	3.2	13.1	10.0

Source: Statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. April 7-12, 1994 (N=800) and October 30-November 6, 1994 (N=1070).

Ryan's erosion in the Collar is interesting, especially given that it is his home region and where he was best-known. Although he still did very well in the Collar on election eve, winning 67 percent of the vote, this represented a four point erosion (compared to normal) since April. Ryan's initial advantage in the Collar was almost certainly based in part on his being more familiar to voters there. Some of his initial lead, therefore, was probably inflated, and the substance of Hofeld's attacks likely moved some voters: among whites in the Collar, pro-choicers outnumbered pro-lifers by a 41 percent to 35 percent margin.

The movement by gender within geography is somewhat puzzling. Downstate, Ryan increased (compared to normal) about equally with both men and women over the course of the campaign. In Chicagoland, by contrast, he increased by 5 points compared to normal among women; he decreased by 3 points compared to normal among men. In Chicagoland (and downstate, for that matter), men and women are nearly indistinguishable on the abortion issue. It is not clear why this gender difference in movement vote would exist in Chicagoland but not downstate.

Comparing the Coalitions

The effect on voters of the different campaign messages and candidates becomes even more clear when the election-eve voting behavior of various groups is compared across candidates, as Table 7-4 does. There are no new numbers in Table 7-4; this table simply assembles the election-eve voting behavior numbers from the first three tables and puts those numbers side by side.

The most striking differences are by geography. Both Netsch and Hofeld gave Chicago whites some reason to support them, and this seems to have held down the overperformance of both Jim Edgar and Jim Ryan. Pat Quinn, who did not run much of a campaign anywhere, allowed George Ryan to overperform by 11 points among Chicago whites.

The abortion issue, and the different attention given it in the three different races, seems to have had some real effect on voters. In the race for Governor, both candidates were strongly pro-choice and the issue was largely dismissed. In both of the down ballot races, however the Republicans were strongly pro-life and the Democrats were strongly pro-choice — *but the Attorney General race was the only one of the two where this difference was publicized widely, and it was especially widely publicized in Chicagoland.* The results of this can be seen in the deviations from normal voting by region. George Ryan's overperformance in Chicagoland was double that of Jim Ryan; downstate, the two had a nearly identical overperformance. Clearly, even though the underlying substance of the two Ryans' positions on abortion was very similar, voters seem to have treated the two candidates differently because they received much more information about one Ryan than the other.

As further evidence of how Hofeld's abortion attacks may have resonated with voters: Jim Ryan was the only one of the three candidates whose home base was the Collar, but his overperformance in the Collar was much smaller than that of the other two Republicans. (As noted above, despite being a Republican stronghold, the Collar was plurality pro-choice in 1994.)

Table 7-4

Illinois Subgroup 1994 Election-Eve Deviations from Normal Voting

		Vote			Deviation from Normal		
	Normal Vote	**Edgar**	**G. Ryan**	**J. Ryan**	**Edgar**	**G. Ryan**	**J. Ryan**
Total	48.3	70.7	62.8	58.4	22.4	14.5	10.1
White	53.7	76.4	68.9	64.3	22.7	15.2	10.6
Black	16.9	37.2	33.8	29.0	20.3	16.9	12.2
Other	46.2	67.5	53.4	49.7	21.3	7.2	3.4
Region (Whites)							
Chicago	48.1	55.0	59.2	51.0	6.9	11.2	2.9
Suburban Cook	54.7	76.1	68.6	61.7	21.3	13.9	6.9
Collar Counties	57.0	79.2	72.9	66.8	22.2	15.9	9.8
North	55.2	82.1	78.3	71.6	27.0	23.1	16.4
South	49.6	76.8	55.0	62.2	27.3	5.4	12.6
Non-White	27.3	48.2	40.2	36.1	20.9	12.9	8.8
Collapsed Region (Whites)							
Chicagoland	54.1	72.7	68.1	61.4	18.6	14.0	7.2
Downstate	53.1	80.2	70.1	68.1	27.1	17.0	14.9
Gender (Whites)							
Men	53.8	76.9	66.4	64.3	23.1	12.6	10.5
Women	53.5	75.3	71.6	64.4	21.8	18.1	10.9
Age/Gender (Whites)							
Men under 40	55.9	78.7	73.0	64.8	22.8	17.1	8.9
Men 40+	52.2	76.1	62.9	63.6	23.8	10.6	11.4
Women <40	52.9	70.5	74.5	66.7	17.7	21.7	13.8
Women 40+	53.8	77.8	69.4	63.1	24.0	15.6	9.4
Region/Gender (Whites)							
Chicagoland Men	55.4	72.7	66.9	60.7	17.4	11.6	5.3
Chicagoland Women	53.0	72.7	69.2	62.0	19.7	16.2	9.0
Downstate Men	52.0	82.0	65.8	68.9	30.1	13.8	16.9
Downstate Women	54.2	78.4	74.3	67.3	24.3	20.2	13.1

Source: Statewide survey conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. October 30-November 6, 1994 (N=1070).

Every candidate assembles his or her own coalition of voters on election day. Coalitions are composed of various groups, each of which makes up a certain proportion of the overall total number of voters supporting that candidate. Comparing the coalitions of three different candidates should yield insights as to which kinds of voters were moved by the differing substances of the various campaigns to side disproportionately with a particular candidate.

Table 7-5 shows, for each of the strategic subgroups, the group's percentage of the population and its normal Republican vote. It then uses these two numbers to compute the group's *normal* share of a Republican candidate's coalition. If all groups simply voted the strength of their party identification, this column shows what percentage contribution each group would make to a generic Republican candidate's vote total.[59] Each candidate's actual coalitions are shown in the next three columns; the final three columns show how much each group within the coalition deviated from its share of a normal Republican's coalition.

The differences among the three coalitions were quite small. George Ryan's coalition had the largest contribution from whites in the North, but he had far fewer votes from whites in the South than either of his 1994 co-partisans (or a normal Republican would be expected to win). Chicago whites were lacking in all three coalitions, but lacking least from George Ryan's coalition. Interestingly, minorities were overly represented in all three candidates' coalitions.

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[59] To compute the normal coalition share of a group: multiply the group's percentage share of the electorate by the group's normal vote, then divide by the statewide normal vote (48.3 in late 1994). For example, for whites: (79.5 x 53.7)/48.3=**88.4%.**

Table 7-5
Illinois 1994 Election-Eve Republican Coalitions

				Coalitions			Coalition Deviations		
	Pct Pop	Normal Vote	Normal GOP Coalition Share	Edgar	G. Ryan	J. Ryan	Edgar	G. Ryan	J. Ryan
Race - Total									
White	79.5	53.7	88.4	86.2	86.5	87.1	-2.2	-2.0	-1.3
Black	13.3	16.9	4.6	6.7	7.7	6.8	2.1	3.1	2.2
Other	7.2	46.2	6.9	7.0	5.8	6.1	.1	-1.1	-.8
Region (Whites)									
Chicago	9.1	48.1	9.1	7.3	8.5	7.5	-1.8	-.5	-1.5
Suburban Cook	19.0	54.7	21.5	20.3	20.0	20.7	-1.2	-1.5	-.8
Collar Counties	15.0	57.0	17.8	17.4	17.2	17.8	-.3	-.5	.0
North	23.3	55.2	26.6	27.0	29.6	27.1	.3	3.0	.4
South	13.3	49.6	13.6	14.4	11.3	14.1	.7	-2.3	.5
Non-White	20.2	27.3	11.4	13.7	13.4	12.8	2.3	2.0	1.4
Collapsed Region (Whites)									
Chicagoland	43.1	54.1	48.4	45.1	45.8	45.9	-3.3	-2.5	-2.4
Downstate	36.6	53.1	40.3	41.3	40.8	41.3	1.0	.5	1.0
Gender (Whites)									
Men	38.4	53.8	42.8	42.9	41.6	42.7	.1	-1.2	.0
Women	41.4	53.5	45.9	43.5	45.1	44.5	-2.4	-.8	-1.4
Age/Gender (Whites)									
Men under 40	14.6	55.9	16.9	16.8	16.4	16.1	-.1	-.4	-.7
Men 40+	23.9	52.2	25.8	26.2	25.3	26.6	.4	-.5	.7
Women <40	14.5	52.9	15.8	14.4	16.6	15.7	-1.4	.8	-.1
Women 40+	26.7	53.8	29.7	28.7	28.1	28.5	-1.0	-1.6	-1.1
Region/Gender (Whites)									
Chicagoland Men	20.7	55.4	23.8	22.2	22.4	22.6	-1.6	-1.4	-1.2
Chicagoland Women	22.4	53.0	24.6	22.8	23.3	23.4	-1.8	-1.2	-1.2
Downstate Men	17.6	52.0	19.0	20.8	19.1	20.1	1.8	.1	1.1
Downstate Women	19.0	54.2	21.3	20.6	21.9	21.2	-.7	.5	-.1

Source: Statewide survey conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. October 30-November 6, 1994 (N=1070).

The small differences in coalitions are disappointing, but not unexpected given the nature of the races. One candidate created a tide which lifted all the boats; another coasted to reelection in a cakewalk. Only one race was competitive until the end, but even that had only one truly partisan issue (abortion) raised; the remainder of the attorney general discourse focused on candidate abilities and priorities.

Considerably sharper differences should be visible in 1998, when two of the races were highly partisan and competitive throughout.

The 1998 Races

There were three Illinois statewide races in 1998 for which I have data: governor, U.S. Senator, and attorney general. As will become clear from the mix of issues each candidate emphasized, the 1998 races provide an even better natural experiment than the 1994 contests did.

Governor

As described in earlier chapters, Jim Edgar retired at the end of his second term, and George Ryan was the Republican nominee. Glenn Poshard, a relatively conservative congressman from the far southern portion of the state, won the Democratic primary after two urban liberals split the Chicagoland vote.

Ryan was in a strong position after the primary, capturing 57 percent of the vote statewide in the first survey conducted. In the wake of the primary, Ryan's overperformance was in the double digits everywhere except the South, which was Poshard's home base. Among Chicagoland whites, he overperformed a normal Republican by 17 points; he was exactly normal downstate. Once party was taken into account, there was no "gender gap" in Ryan's support: he overperformed among both men and women by the same margin. Nor was there any gender gap within a given region: Ryan's overperformance was the same among men and women in Chicagoland, and he was almost exactly normal among both men and women downstate.

Despite these strong numbers, there was still concern among Ryan's strategists. Poshard was doing extremely well in his home base but was not well known in Chicagoland; fully 41 percent of Chicagoland whites had no impression of Poshard, even after the primary. The concern was that Poshard was still free to *define himself* for voters in Chicagoland. It was possible that the only reason Poshard was currently underperforming in Chicagoland was because he was currently unknown, and if voters got to know him on his own terms, they might jump from Ryan's ship to Poshard's.

The gun issue was selected in much the same manner as the crime issue was in 1994: research found that when voters were informed of Poshard's voting record on gun issues, large numbers of voters became less likely to support him[60]. Furthermore, polls indicated that these attacks would do some damage to Poshard even downstate. This was important, because Poshard started off in a very strong position downstate as a result of it being his home base. The gun issue was also attractive because it helped with women, who are usually less receptive to Republican messages, without alienating men. For example, when told that Poshard had voted to allow people to own assault weapons, 70 percent of the white women — and 76 percent of the white women in Chicagoland — said they were *much* less likely to support Poshard as a result. The issue would be a little less effective with white Chicagoland men (53 percent said it made them *much* less likely to support Poshard), and least effective with white men downstate (36 percent *much* less likely). Even among white downstate men, however, the total percent “less likely” to vote for Poshard (60 percent) was larger than the total percent “more likely” (24 percent) by better than two-to-one. The Ryan campaign’s conclusion was that Poshard’s voting record on guns would be a very effective issue.

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[60] Some examples of the percentages saying they were less likely to vote for Poshard as a result of hearing each of the following attack lines: "He strongly opposes gun control laws and has run campaign advertising in his district saying, 'I oppose any form of gun control.'" (73% less likely); "In Congress, he voted in favor of letting people own assault weapons." (80% less likely).

Chapter 6 described the issue content of this race in great detail: Ryan attacked Poshard early and often as not supporting any “reasonable” restrictions on gun ownership; only late in the campaign did allegations of scandal in George Ryan’s Secretary of State office break, but even then Ryan continued to hammer Poshard on the gun issue. Ryan won by 51 percent to 47 percent on election day.

Table 7-6 details the effect that Ryan’s campaign messages had on various groups of voters. Most notably, Ryan reversed the traditional gender gap. In March, he did five points better with men than with women; taking into account the normal Republican vote of each gender, he was exactly normal with both. On election eve, however, Ryan was doing better with women (66 percent) than with men (62 percent), and his overperformance was twice as large with women (+16) than with men (+8). The “reverse gender gap” persisted in both Chicagoland and downstate; in both regions, Ryan gained substantially among women, but either held steady or declined somewhat with men. As a result, in large part, of his gains with downstate women, Ryan went from exactly normal downstate in the wake of the primary to a five point overperformance downstate by election eve. In Poshard’s home base of the far South, in particular, Ryan made enormous strides: from a 20 point underperformance after the primary to a slight overperformance on election eve.

The Ryan campaign created an issue environment designed to benefit itself with particular identifiable social groups within the Illinois electorate, and the effects of this strategy are clearly visible. As these groups, particularly women, and especially Chicagoland women, gained more information about the candidates’ stances on an important issue, they overcame their normal partisan inclinations and sided with the candidate whose views they shared — and they did so to a substantially greater degree than the groups (particularly men, and especially men downstate) who were less inclined to share Ryan’s beliefs about gun control. Furthermore, a region which had inflated support for a “favorite son” early in the year ended up voting much more like it normally would once additional information was supplied about both candidates.

Table 7-6

Illinois 1998 Subgroup Changes in Gubernatorial Voting

	Normal Vote		George Ryan Vote			Deviation from Normal		
	Mar.	Election Eve	Mar.	Election Eve	Change	Mar.	Election Eve	Change
Total	48.0	47.5	57.1	58.5	1.4	9.1	11.0	1.9
Race-Total								
White	53.8	52.4	62.6	64.7	2.1	8.8	12.2	3.5
Black	16.6	15.4	27.5	25.6	-2.0	11.0	10.2	-.8
Other	41.0	40.4	45.8	36.8	-9.1	4.9	-3.6	-8.5
Region (Whites)								
Chicago	41.1	42.0	53.4	65.8	12.4	12.3	23.9	11.5
Suburban Cook	55.4	55.4	72.1	69.5	-2.6	16.7	14.1	-2.6
Collar Counties	57.8	57.6	78.4	76.3	-2.1	20.6	18.7	-1.9
North	56.5	54.2	66.3	60.0	-6.3	9.8	5.8	-4.0
South	50.6	46.8	31.2	49.4	18.2	-19.5	2.6	22.1
Non-White	24.8	24.6	34.0	29.7	-4.3	9.2	5.1	-4.1
Collapsed Region (Whites)								
Chicagoland	52.9	53.0	70.1	71.4	1.3	17.2	18.4	1.2
Downstate	54.4	51.5	54.1	56.2	2.1	-.3	4.6	5.0
Gender (Whites)								
Men	56.7	54.9	65.5	62.5	-3.1	8.9	7.6	-1.3
Women	50.8	50.0	60.1	66.4	6.3	9.2	16.3	7.1
Age/Gender (Whites)								
Men under 40	56.7	55.8	75.0	71.3	-3.7	18.3	15.6	-2.7
Men 40+	56.6	54.5	59.5	57.9	-1.6	2.9	3.4	.5
Women <40	51.2	48.6	63.5	70.2	6.7	12.3	21.6	9.3
Women 40+	50.5	50.7	58.9	64.6	5.7	8.4	14.0	5.6
Region/Gender (Whites)								
Chicagoland Men	55.9	55.6	72.8	68.9	-3.9	16.9	13.3	-3.6
Chicagoland Women	50.2	50.7	67.5	73.8	6.3	17.3	23.1	5.8
Downstate Men	57.5	54.0	56.6	54.6	-2.0	-.9	.5	1.4
Downstate Women	51.5	49.3	51.9	57.6	5.7	.3	8.3	8.0

Source: Statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. March 25-29, 1998 (N=800) and Oct 24-Nov 1, 1998 (N=1290).

U.S. Senator

The 1998 Illinois Senate race provides a very interesting contrast to the issue environment created in the gubernatorial contest. As described in the previous chapter, Republican state senator Peter Fitzgerald challenged first term incumbent Senator Carol Moseley-Braun.

In March, immediately following the primary, the contest was a tie; each candidate had half of the committed vote. Not surprisingly, given Moseley-Braun's status as the first black woman Senator, there was a substantial racial component to voting behavior: Fitzgerald overperformed with whites by six points; Moseley-Braun overperformed with minorities by 12 points. Among whites, Fitzgerald did equally well in Chicagoland and downstate, but he overperformed by a wider margin with men (+10) than with women (+2). This same gender gap persisted within both Chicagoland and the downstate regions.

Holding the line on taxes was Fitzgerald's signature issue, and it was a greater concern among white men (26 percent named it as a most or second most important agenda item) than among white women (17 percent) or minorities (10 percent). There was little difference in the importance of this issue by age or region, however. Fitzgerald's emphasis on taxes should have had a disproportionate impact on men, as they learned that he was the candidate who shared their concerns. In fact, given that he had been emphasizing the tax issue even during the primary campaign, this is likely one reason why men were *already* supporting him substantially more than they would support a normal Republican.

The gun issue was raised and debated, but neither candidate was discredited with being as far out of the mainstream as Glenn Poshard. Unlike Poshard, who had voted against the measure in Congress, when Fitzgerald was attacked he was able to respond that although he supported second amendment rights, he also supported "reasonable" gun control measures such as the Brady Bill. Moseley-Braun did not push the issue further. The effect of the exchange was to identify, for voters concerned about this issue, which candidate was closest to their own beliefs and values.

Although the 1998 surveys do not include questions measuring general feelings about the gun issue, and therefore cannot be used to evaluate voting behavior in 1998, a more recent Illinois survey did ask voters which side of the gun control debate they tend to come down on, and how strongly[61]. While voters as a whole (and white voters) are almost exactly split between those calling themselves "strongly pro-gun" (21% of all voters, 23% of whites) and "strongly anti-gun" (25% of all voters, 22% of whites), Table 7-7 details some enormous differences in attitudes toward guns among various types of Illinois voters. For example, among whites, sizable pluralities of downstaters (31 percent), men (34 percent), and especially downstate men (45 percent) call themselves "strongly pro gun." White Chicagoland residents (31 percent strongly anti-gun), women (32 percent), and especially white Chicagoland women (41 percent) are the mirror image. Two other groups, Chicagoland men and downstate women, are split and conflicted.

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[61] On the gun issue, do you consider yourself (ROTATE: pro-gun, anti-gun) or somewhere in between? (IF PR0-GUN/ANTI-GUN) Are you strongly (pro-gun/anti-gun) or just somewhat (pro-gun/anti-gun)?

If voters were paying attention to the substantive discourse of the campaign and responding to it reasonably, the gun issue should have had the effect of moving men, downstate residents, and especially downstate men in Fitzgerald's direction — but dampening his appeal among the Chicagoland and female groups.

Table 7-7
Strong Attitudes Toward Gun Control

Percent strongly pro-gun and strongly anti-gun among various strategic subgroups

	Strongly Pro-Gun	**Strongly Anti-Gun**
Total	21	25
All whites	23	22
White Strategic Subgroups:		
Region		
Chicagoland	16	31
Downstate	31	12
Gender		
Men	34	13
Women	13	32
Region/Gender		
Chicagoland Men	24	20
Chicagoland Women	9	41
Downstate Men	45	4
Downstate Women	17	21

Source: Illinois statewide survey conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. April 9-14, 2002. N=1200.

The other big “issue” in the Senate contest was Carol Moseley-Braun’s race; as the first black woman ever elected to the U.S. Senate, she was wildly popular among Illinois blacks — and especially well-liked by blacks in her home base of Chicago. Given her enormously strong support among this group, it would be surprising if Fitzgerald was able to make any inroads with blacks over the course of the campaign. If anything, continued exposure to campaign activity should have served all the more to highlight for blacks that Moseley-Braun was “one of us” and solidified their support for her.

It should be noted, however, that Fitzgerald’s wife, Nina, is a Mexican-American. Fitzgerald emphasized his wife’s ethnicity on the campaign trail when, late in the campaign, one of his campaign workers was accused of having links to the white separatist movement (McRoberts and Kemper, 1998). Those paying attention to the campaign, then, would have been aware of Fitzgerald’s interracial marriage and this should have been an informal signal of his tolerance for minorities. Although it may not have been enough of a signal to peel blacks away from Moseley-Braun, it may have helped improve his initial 13-point underperformance with other minorities. It is possible that other minorities assumed, early in the year, that because Fitzgerald was a conservative white Republican challenging a black incumbent, he might be unsympathetic to minority concerns. As information about Fitzgerald’s interracial marriage became better known, this should have helped erase those misconceptions and moved minorities back to a more normal partisan voting pattern.

As Table 7-8 details, it appears that many strategic subgroups reacted to the information environment of the campaign quite responsibly. While Moseley-Braun managed, on election eve, to wrap up nearly every last black vote, Fitzgerald improved his performance among other minorities substantially. By election eve, he was underperforming a normal Republican by just 4 points with other minorities. It appears that something in the foregoing campaign discourse, perhaps the information about Fitzgerald's marriage, did serve to make him more attractive to minority voters.

The gun issue also seems to have created changes in the voting behavior of important strategic subgroups — and these changes are in accord with the respective groups' beliefs about that issue. Fitzgerald made strong gains (relative to a normal Republican) with men and downstate voters, the groups most sympathetic to his position on guns. While Fitzgerald made equal gains with both men and women, the bulk of those gains with women came downstate. He improved by ten points, compared to normal, with downstate women — but by only one point with Chicagoland women. I would have expected especially large gains among downstate men, but Fitzgerald's progress was actually slightly better with Chicagoland men and downstate women. It is possible that downstate men had already, in the wake of the primary, learned much of what they “needed to know” to bring them into Fitzgerald’s camp; the ensuing campaign seems to have served mainly to improve his standing with other groups sympathetic to his issue agenda. Importantly, the one group *least* disposed to Fitzgerald’s messages, white Chicagoland women, moved *least* in his direction over the course of the campaign and were one of his weakest white groups on election eve.

Table 7-8
Illinois 1998 Subgroup Changes in Senatorial Voting

	Normal Vote		**Peter Fitzgerald Vote**			**Deviation from Normal**		
	Mar.	**Election Eve**	**Mar.**	**Election Eve**	**Change**	**Mar.**	**Election Eve**	**Change**
Total	48.0	47.5	50.1	54.6	4.5	2.1	7.1	5.0
Race-Total								
White	53.8	52.4	59.9	63.6	3.6	6.1	11.1	5.0
Black	16.6	15.4	5.2	1.7	-3.4	-11.4	-13.7	-2.3
Other	41.0	40.4	28.2	36.6	8.4	-12.8	-3.8	9.0
Region (Whites)								
Chicago	41.1	42.0	42.5	45.4	2.9	1.4	3.4	2.0
Suburban Cook	55.4	55.4	60.7	68.3	7.6	5.3	12.9	7.6
Collar Counties	57.8	57.6	67.3	67.2	-.1	9.6	9.6	.0
North	56.5	54.2	62.8	66.6	3.8	6.3	12.4	6.1
South	50.6	46.8	54.3	60.8	6.5	3.6	14.0	10.4
Non-White	24.8	24.6	13.1	14.6	1.5	-11.7	-9.9	1.8
Collapsed Region (Whites)								
Chicagoland	52.9	53.0	59.0	62.3	3.3	6.1	9.3	3.1
Downstate	54.4	51.5	59.9	64.5	4.6	5.5	13.0	7.4
Gender (Whites)								
Men	56.7	54.9	66.4	69.9	3.5	9.8	15.0	5.2
Women	50.8	50.0	52.9	57.3	4.4	2.1	7.3	5.2
Age/Gender (Whites)								
Men under 40	56.7	55.8	61.4	67.9	6.5	4.7	12.2	7.4
Men 40+	56.6	54.5	69.7	71.2	1.5	13.1	16.7	3.6
Women <40	51.2	48.6	47.5	51.1	3.6	-3.8	2.5	6.2
Women 40+	50.5	50.7	55.6	60.2	4.6	5.1	9.6	4.4
Region/Gender (Whites)								
Chicagoland Men	55.9	55.6	65.3	70.7	5.4	9.4	15.1	5.7
Chicagoland Women	50.2	50.7	52.9	54.5	1.6	2.7	3.8	1.1
Downstate Men	57.5	54.0	67.8	68.9	1.2	10.2	14.9	4.7
Downstate Women	51.5	49.3	52.9	60.5	7.6	1.3	11.2	9.9

Source: Statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. March 25-29, 1998 (N=800) and Oct 24-Nov 1, 1998 (N=1290).

Attorney General

The 1998 Illinois attorney general race serves as an interesting control case. As noted previously, incumbent Republican Jim Ryan faced only token opposition from Democrat Miriam Santos. Ryan maintained a very large lead throughout 1998, and won by a wide margin in November. Santos engaged in nearly no discernable campaign activity, leaving Ryan free to wage an entirely positive campaign describing his accomplishments in office. There was no discussion of divisive partisan issues, and even attentive voters would have gleaned little about the respective issue positions of the two candidates.

In January and in November, Ryan overperformed a normal Republican with every strategic subgroup examined. Over the course of the campaign, he lost some ground among blacks, but held steady with other minorities. Ryan advertised in every region except the far South, and this is the only region in which he did not improve over the course of the year. Even in the South, however, Ryan overperformed a normal Republican by 11 points on election eve.

As was true in George Ryan’s 1994 cakewalk, Jim Ryan’s biggest gains in 1998 were with the less-Republican groups such as women. He made especially impressive strides with younger women, who are among the least Republican of the white groups; his overperformance with them climbed from +10 to +19. Likewise, with another Democratic-leaning group, Chicago whites, Ryan increased his overperformance from +14 to +24. It is not clear what substantive information, if any, from the campaign would have been responsible for moving the younger women. It appears, rather, that when a candidate rides an overwhelmingly positive tide, coupled with a lack of countervailing messages from an opponent, groups initially less receptive to the candidate's messages tend to behave much more like the candidate's own partisans.

Table 7-9
Illinois 1998 Subgroup Changes in Attorney General Voting

	Normal Vote		Jim Ryan Vote			Deviation from Normal		
	Jan.	Election Eve	Jan.	Election Eve	Change	Jan.	Election Eve	Change
Total	47.7	47.5	62.9	67.2	4.3	15.2	19.7	4.5
Race-Total								
White	52.4	52.4	69.7	75.1	5.4	17.3	22.7	5.4
Black	16.4	15.4	28.4	24.7	-3.7	12.0	9.3	-2.7
Other	47.3	40.4	47.4	40.7	-6.7	.2	.3	.2
Region (Whites)								
Chicago	37.4	42.0	51.7	65.8	14.2	14.2	23.9	9.6
Suburban Cook	51.5	55.4	74.1	81.8	7.7	22.6	26.4	3.8
Collar Counties	59.1	57.6	79.8	82.3	2.5	20.7	24.7	4.0
North	56.5	54.2	73.3	76.9	3.6	16.8	22.7	5.9
South	48.4	46.8	58.7	57.5	-1.2	10.2	10.7	.4
Non-White	26.4	24.6	34.4	30.2	-4.2	8.0	5.6	-2.3
Collapsed Region (Whites)								
Chicagoland	51.4	53.0	71.2	78.2	7.0	19.8	25.2	5.3
Downstate	53.6	51.5	67.8	70.4	2.6	14.3	18.9	4.6
Gender (Whites)								
Men	54.2	54.9	72.3	76.3	4.0	18.1	21.4	3.3
Women	50.7	50.0	67.1	73.3	6.2	16.4	23.2	6.8
Age/Gender (Whites)								
Men under 40	54.4	55.8	71.1	77.5	6.4	16.6	21.7	5.1
Men 40+	54.1	54.5	73.2	75.9	2.7	19.1	21.4	2.3
Women <40	49.6	48.6	59.3	67.8	8.5	9.6	19.1	9.5
Women 40+	51.2	50.7	71.6	75.9	4.2	20.4	25.2	4.8
Region/Gender (Whites)								
Chicagoland Men	52.0	55.6	73.8	81.3	7.6	21.8	25.7	4.0
Chicagoland Women	50.8	50.7	68.9	75.2	6.3	18.1	24.5	6.4
Downstate Men	56.8	54.0	70.7	69.9	-.8	13.9	15.8	2.0
Downstate Women	50.6	49.3	64.8	70.8	6.1	14.2	21.6	7.4

Source: Statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. March 25-29, 1998 (N=800) and Oct 24-Nov 1, 1998 (N=1290).

Comparing the Coalitions

When the election-eve voting behavior of various groups is compared across candidates, it becomes quite clear that groups reacted to the different information content of the different races — and made their candidate various candidate choices accordingly. Table 7-10 assembles the election-eve voting behavior numbers from the three individual 1998 candidate tables and puts the numbers side by side, facilitating comparison across races.

There are a number of striking differences in voting behavior among subgroups across races, and these appear closely connected to the different issue environments the campaigns in those races created. George Ryan did much better, relative to a normal Republican, in Chicagoland than downstate; Fitzgerald's performance was the reverse. He did much better in the gun-friendly downstate region than in Chicagoland. Fitzgerald's overperformance with men was more than double his overperformance with women; George Ryan was again the mirror image: his overperformance with *women* was *more than double* his overperformance with men. By contrast, Jim Ryan (the control candidate), overperformed equally well with men and women.

Putting gender and region together, the voting behavior differences are especially stark. Fitzgerald overperformed by 15 points with downstate men, one of the most pro-gun groups in the Illinois electorate. George Ryan's performance with downstate men was just normal for a Republican.

Table 7-10

Illinois Subgroup 1998 Election-Eve Deviations from Normal Voting

		Vote			**Deviation from Normal**		
	Normal Vote	**Fitz-gerald**	**G. Ryan**	**J. Ryan**	**Fitz-gerald**	**G. Ryan**	**J. Ryan**
Total	47.5	54.6	58.5	67.2	7.1	11.0	19.7
Race - Total							
White	52.4	63.6	64.7	75.1	11.1	12.2	22.7
Black	15.4	1.7	25.6	24.7	**-13.7**	**10.2**	**9.3**
Other	40.4	36.6	36.8	40.7	-3.8	-3.6	.3
Region (Whites)							
Chicago	42.0	45.4	65.8	65.8	3.4	23.9	23.9
Suburban Cook	55.4	68.3	69.5	81.8	12.9	14.1	26.4
Collar Counties	57.6	67.2	76.3	82.3	9.6	18.7	24.7
North	54.2	66.6	60.0	76.9	12.4	5.8	22.7
South	46.8	60.8	49.4	57.5	14.0	2.6	10.7
Non-White	24.6	14.6	29.7	30.2	-9.9	5.1	5.6
Collapsed Region (Whites)							
Chicagoland	53.0	62.3	71.4	78.2	**9.3**	**18.4**	25.2
Downstate	51.5	64.5	56.2	70.4	**13.0**	**4.6**	18.9
Gender (Whites)							
Men	54.9	69.9	62.5	76.3	**15.0**	**7.6**	**21.4**
Women	50.0	57.3	66.4	73.3	**7.3**	**16.3**	**23.2**
Age/Gender (Whites)							
Men under 40	55.8	67.9	71.3	77.5	12.2	15.6	21.7
Men 40+	54.5	71.2	57.9	75.9	**16.7**	**3.4**	21.4
Women <40	48.6	51.1	70.2	67.8	**2.5**	**21.6**	19.1
Women 40+	50.7	60.2	64.6	75.9	9.6	14.0	25.2
Region/Gender (Whites)							
Chicagoland Men	55.6	70.7	68.9	81.3	15.1	13.3	25.7
Chicagoland Women	50.7	54.5	73.8	75.2	**3.8**	**23.1**	24.5
Downstate Men	54.0	68.9	54.6	69.9	**14.9**	**.5**	15.8
Downstate Women	49.3	60.5	57.6	70.8	11.2	8.3	21.6

Source: Statewide survey conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. October 24-November 1, 1998 (N=1290). Numbers in boldface are of special analytical interest.

Chicagoland women, one of the most anti-gun groups in the Illinois electorate, were the mirror image: George Ryan overperformed by 23 points with them, while Fitzgerald did only four points better than a normal Republican.

These subgroup differences in voting behavior are further reflected in the election eve coalitions each man assembled. As Table 7-11 details, white men were half of Fitzgerald's coalition; they were less than 43 percent of George Ryan's. White women, by contrast, made up a larger portion of George Ryan's coalition (48.4 percent) than Fitzgerald's (45.1 percent). There were also substantial regional differences in the coalitions; Fitzgerald's was almost evenly divided between Chicagoland and downstate, while George Ryan's was dominated by Chicagoland whites. As might be expected, downstate men

Table 7-11
Illinois 1998 Election-Eve Republican Coalitions

				Coalitions			**Coalition Deviations**		
Oct 24-Nov 1, 1998	**Pct Pop**	**Normal Vote**	**Normal GOP Coalition Share**	**Fitz-gerald**	**G. Ryan**	**J. Ryan**	**Fitz-gerald**	**G. Ryan**	**J. Ryan**
Race - Total		47.5							
White	82.4	52.4	89.5	95.1	91.1	92.1	5.6	1.6	2.6
Black	11.1	15.4	3.5	.3	4.8	4.2	**-3.2**	**1.3**	**.7**
Other	6.5	40.4	5.4	4.6	4.1	3.7	**-.8**	**-1.3**	**-1.7**
Region (Whites)									
Chicago	10.9	42.0	9.5	9.0	12.0	10.8	-.5	2.5	1.3
Suburban Cook	16.3	55.4	18.7	19.9	19.4	20.8	1.1	.7	2.0
Collar Counties	17.8	57.6	21.2	21.7	23.7	22.5	.5	2.5	1.3
North	24.0	54.2	26.9	29.3	24.6	27.8	2.4	-2.3	.9
South	13.7	46.8	13.3	15.3	11.4	10.4	2.0	-1.9	-2.9
Non-White	17.3	24.6	8.8	4.9	8.9	7.8	-3.9	.1	-1.0
Collapsed Region (Whites)									
Chicagoland	45.0	53.0	49.5	50.5	55.1	54.1	**1.0**	**5.6**	4.6
Downstate	37.7	51.5	40.2	44.7	36.1	38.1	**4.5**	**-4.2**	-2.1
Gender (Whites)									
Men	39.2	54.9	44.5	50.0	42.8	45.8	**5.5**	**-1.8**	**1.2**
Women	43.6	50.0	45.1	45.1	48.4	46.4	**.0**	**3.2**	**1.3**
Age/Gender (Whites)									
Men under 40	13.9	55.8	16.0	17.6	16.9	16.1	1.5	.9	.1
Men 40+	25.3	54.5	28.6	32.5	25.8	29.8	**3.9**	**-2.8**	1.2
Women <40	14.7	48.6	14.8	13.7	17.5	14.3	**-1.1**	**2.7**	-.5
Women 40+	28.8	50.7	30.2	31.3	30.9	31.9	1.1	.8	1.8
Region/Gender (Whites)									
Chicagoland Men	21.4	55.6	24.6	27.5	26.0	27.5	2.9	1.4	2.8
Chicagoland Women	23.6	50.7	24.8	22.9	29.2	26.6	**-1.9**	**4.4**	1.8
Downstate Men	17.8	54.0	19.9	22.5	16.7	18.3	**2.6**	**-3.1**	-1.6
Downstate Women	19.9	49.3	20.3	22.2	19.2	19.8	1.9	-1.2	-.6

Source: Statewide survey conducted by Market Strategies, Inc. October 24-November 1, 1998 (N=1290).

were a substantially larger portion of Fitzgerald's coalition (22.5 percent) than of George Ryan's coalition (16.7 percent), but Chicagoland women were much more prominent in George Ryan's coalition (29.2 percent) than in Peter Fitzgerald's (22.9 percent).

At the risk of stating the obvious, when an election contest features a prominent minority candidate, this can have a significant impact on the ultimate coalitions each side assembles. The gubernatorial contest featured two white candidates, and George Ryan's ultimate coalition differed only slightly (in racial terms) from the coalition a normal Republican would be expected to assemble. In the Senate contest, which featured a prominent black opponent, Peter Fitzgerald's coalition ended up being disproportionately white. It should be noted that although the attorney general contest featured an Hispanic woman challenger, Miriam Santos seems to have engaged in far too little campaign activity for this to have become relevant to minorities. Still, of the three candidates, it is interesting that Jim Ryan's coalition had the smallest proportion of "other minorities" (most of whom are Hispanic), while the coalition of Peter Fitzgerald (whose wife is Mexican-American) had the largest Hispanic share.

Peter Fitzgerald and George Ryan were members of the same party and received an almost identical number of votes on election night in 1998 (1,709,041 and 1,714,094, respectively). Importantly, however, there were substantial differences in the structure of their coalitions, and these structural differences correspond to the differing issue content of the races. Voters in strategic subgroups seem to have responded quite responsibly to the messages featured in these different races, and assembled themselves accordingly on election eve.

Candidate-Specific Coalitions

A final natural experiment merits some mention. Two of these candidates, the Ryans, were on the ballot in both 1994 and 1998, and in one instance the candidate (Jim) was even seeking election to the same office in both years. Each Ryan ran very different campaigns in the two different years, however. In other words, this analysis holds the candidate constant and changes everything of substance about the race. George Ryan’s 1994 race was a cakewalk that focused on his accomplishments in office; his 1998 campaign was a partisan duel. Jim Ryan’s two races were different from each other in the same way, but in the reverse chronological order. If voters were merely responding to the personal qualities of each man, each man’s coalition should be very similar across years (the Jim Ryan 1994 coalition should closely resemble the Jim Ryan 1998 coalition, with the two George Ryan coalitions also closely resembling each other.) If, by contrast, voters were responding to the substantive issues discussed in each race, each Ryan’s

1998 coalition should look quite different from the same Ryan's 1994 coalition.

Table 7-12 indicates clear differences in each Ryan's coalition across years. George Ryan's coalition was dominated, to a substantially greater degree than in 1994, by Chicagoland voters (and especially Chicagoland women) when his campaign messages had substantially more appeal to those voters. Likewise, downstate voters, especially downstate men, comprised a substantially smaller share of his coalition in 1998 than in 1994. Although the candidate was the same, in 1994 George Ryan was an all-positive favorite son from Kankakee; in 1998, his messages on guns played much better in Chicago than in Peoria.

Jim Ryan's coalitions were also quite different in the two years. When he was attacked on an issue on which his position was shared more downstate than in Chicagoland (abortion in 1994), downstate voters comprised a greater share of his coalition. When he coasted to reelection in 1998, Chicagoland was disproportionately represented. Also in 1998, there were few differences between white men and women. When he was attacked on abortion in 1994, there was more of a skew toward white men in his coalition. Finally, interestingly, there is some evidence that the ethnicity of his challenger may have made some difference in 1998. In 1994, minorities were over represented in Ryan's coalition, compared to a normal Republican candidate, by 1.4 percentage points. In 1998, when his challenger was an ethnic minority, minorities were under represented in his coalition by one percentage point. Although this difference is not large, it is in the expected direction.

Table 7-12
Candidate-Specific Illinois Coalitions

	Candidate Coalitions				**Coalition Deviations from Normal**			
	George Ryan		**Jim Ryan**		**George Ryan**		**Jim Ryan**	
	1994	**1998**	**1994**	**1998**	**1994**	**1998**	**1994**	**1998**
Race - Total								
White	86.5	91.1	87.1	92.1	-2.0	1.6	-1.3	2.6
Black	7.7	4.8	6.8	4.2	3.1	1.3	2.2	.7
Other	5.8	4.1	6.1	3.7	-1.1	-1.3	-.8	-1.7
Region (Whites)								
Chicago	8.5	12.0	7.5	10.8	-.5	2.5	-1.5	1.3
Suburban Cook	20.0	19.4	20.7	20.8	-1.5	.7	-.8	2.0
Collar Counties	17.2	23.7	17.8	22.5	-.5	2.5	.0	1.3
North	29.6	24.6	27.1	27.8	3.0	-2.3	.4	.9
South	11.3	11.4	14.1	10.4	-2.3	-1.9	.5	-2.9
Non-White	13.4	8.9	12.8	7.8	2.0	.1	1.4	-1.0
Collapsed Region (Whites)								
Chicagoland	45.8	55.1	45.9	54.1	**-2.5**	**5.6**	**-2.4**	**4.6**
Downstate	40.8	36.1	41.3	38.1	**.5**	**-4.2**	**1.0**	**-2.1**
Gender (Whites)								
Men	41.6	42.8	42.7	45.8	**-1.2**	**-1.8**	**.0**	**1.2**
Women	45.1	48.4	44.5	46.4	**-.8**	**3.2**	**-1.4**	**1.3**
Age/Gender (Whites)								
Men under 40	16.4	16.9	16.1	16.1	-.4	.9	-.7	.1
Men 40+	25.3	25.8	26.6	29.8	-.5	-2.8	.7	1.2
Women <40	16.6	17.5	15.7	14.3	.8	2.7	-.1	-.5
Women 40+	28.1	30.9	28.5	31.9	-1.6	.8	-1.1	1.8
Region/Gender (Whites)								
Chicagoland Men	22.4	26.0	22.6	27.5	-1.4	1.4	-1.2	2.8
Chicagoland Women	23.3	29.2	23.4	26.6	**-1.2**	**4.4**	**-1.2**	**1.8**
Downstate Men	19.1	16.7	20.1	18.3	**.1**	**-3.1**	**1.1**	**-1.6**
Downstate Women	21.9	19.2	21.2	19.8	.5	-1.2	-.1	-.6

Source: Statewide surveys conducted by Market Strategies, Inc.
October 30-November 6, 1994 (N=1070) and October 24-November 1, 1998 (N=1290).

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated another important consequence that subpresidential campaigns have for voters. Even when the overall division of the vote remains steady between January and November, there are often very important changes in the *structure* and *ordering* of the vote which occur over those intervening months — and these changes are often closely tied to the substantive issue environment created by the competing campaigns. Furthermore, even when two candidate of the same party win the same number of votes in the same election cycle, there are often important differences in the ultimate coalitions those candidates assemble — and, again, those differences are often closely related to differences in the substantive issue content featured in the two different races. This chapter has examined in depth the ability of subpresidential campaigns to assemble coalitions, with a particular focus on how voters *assemble themselves* in coalitions differently as a result of exposure to campaign messages. It appears clear that campaigns are often successful in reaching their strategic target groups with the messages those target groups need, and voters in those groups seem to respond quite responsibly on election day.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS

V.O. Key explained that the “perverse and unorthodox argument” of his classic *The Responsible Electorate* was that “voters are not fools.” (p. 7). He went on to contend that “to be sure, many individual voters act in odd ways indeed; yet in the large the electorate behaves about as rationally and responsibly as we should expect, given the clarity of the alternatives presented to it and the character of the information available to it.” This dissertation has used a wide variety of novel data sources to demonstrate the manner in which, and the circumstances under which, campaign activity serves as a key mechanism in producing the responsible electorate of which V.O. Key wrote.

Campaigns can and do influence election outcomes, but determining winning and losing strategies was only a peripheral focus of this research. From a normative and empirical perspective, a much more interesting area of inquiry is the “information building” role of modern campaigns, and the effects of this information on voters (if not on election outcomes *per se*). Campaign consultants have no altruistic or public service motivation in selecting the strategies they pursue. As rational actors, they wage a campaign with one overriding goal: victory. It is my contention that this self-interested pursuit brings with it a highly salutary collateral consequence for voters: the information generated by campaign activity produces a better-informed electorate which is better able to order its preferences and connect those preferences with candidates on election day. In this manner, campaign activity is the critical mechanism which produces the more responsible electorate of which V.O. Key wrote.

The dissertation found numerous examples of the ways in which campaigns supply the information voters need to behave more responsibly. And perhaps even more importantly, the dissertation found numerous examples of voters behaving substantially more responsibly when armed with more campaign-generated information about the candidates and issues at stake.

Chapter 3 found that campaigns can and do serve the important public service function of helping voters organize candidate choices and connect those choices with other political and ideological preferences. In the presence of a contested, two-sided campaign, voters grow more informed about the candidates or ballot measures in question, and make choices which are more consistent with other preferences. When campaign activity is lacking, voters behave more randomly. Voters were able to organize their choices for contested ballot measures into coherent dimensions; they were unable to do the same with their choices for uncontested judicial retention candidates — despite the fact that the judicial candidates displayed as much or more objective ideological diversity as the ballot measures. Furthermore, voters made a strong connection between candidate preferences and their choices for the well-publicized ideological ballot measures. There was almost no relationship between choices for these same well-publicized ideological ballot measures and choices in the unpublicized judicial retention contests. In the face of low information, some voters used what little was available to them: ideological cues supplied by the names of the candidates themselves. For most, however, there was not even this much structure to their judicial retention choices. Without campaign activity to supply substantive information about the judges and their philosophies, voters were unable to order their retention preferences or connect these to other political values.

The remainder of the dissertation explored in more depth the degree to which campaigns shape voter perceptions of candidates over time, and the manner in which these “informed perceptions” are in turn connected with voting.

The dissertation’s primary focus is subpresidential voting behavior. Much of the previously published voting behavior research has been preoccupied with presidential elections; the degree to which subpresidential voting behavior is similar or dissimilar to presidential voting behavior has been largely unexplored. In Chapters 4 and 5, I examined these similarities and dissimilarities in depth. The idea was to compare, over time, the relative impact of party identification and independent impressions of the candidates themselves on voting behavior, in both presidential and subpresidential races.

Chapter 4 confirmed many of the principal findings of previous presidential-level voting behavior research. Party identification was enormously correlated with the presidential vote choice, and it dominated the voting behavior calculus from spring through election day. By spring, voters had already formed distinct impressions of the respective candidates, but these impressions, and the connection of those impressions with the vote, were themselves highly influenced by party identification. Furthermore, this relative mix of vote drivers tended to change little over time. "All party all the time" may be too strong of a characterization, because there was some room for candidate impressions to influence the vote independently of partisanship. But for the most part, I found that presidential contests are so closely connected to the meaning of one's party identification, partisanship exerts a strong influence over voters from early in the presidential election year through election day.

Chapter 5, by contrast, found that voters in subpresidential races tend to be more open to "learning" about the individual candidates, forming independent impressions of those candidates, and connecting impressions with vote decisions in a manner which is less closely tied to one's partisan predispositions than in presidential races. I concluded that subpresidential campaigns have the ability to break through some of the partisan cognitive barriers to defection that exist at the presidential level, and build impressions of candidates which are not as closely tied up in partisanship as they are at the top of the ticket. My research suggests that at the state level, campaigns do more than merely activate party voting. Campaigns serve the important function of building impressions of candidates that, while based to some degree on partisanship, impact the vote in a manner which is independent of partisanship. This independent influence of campaigns tends to grow larger, and even eclipse the influence of partisanship itself, as campaigns progress.

Voting behavior is not based merely on favorable and unfavorable impressions of the various candidates, however. The issues about which a voter is concerned are a powerful guide to his choices on election day — but only if a particular candidate has given those issues enough attention on the campaign trail to demonstrate that they will truly be high priorities when he is elected to office. Chapter 6 identified the major issues discussed in six different statewide campaigns, and then tracked the vote over time among the constituents of each issue. When a particular candidate emphasized a particular issue problem area, those in the electorate who were most concerned about that issue often responded by deviating substantially from their normal partisan voting inclinations. By tracking a number of constituencies over time in a variety of campaign contexts and issue environments, the dissertation was able to provide a clearer understanding the circumstances under which priming is most likely to take place. Generally speaking, electorates seem highly resistant to outright manipulation of issue concerns. But when particular issues are already of special concern, and those issues receive prominent attention in campaign discourse, constituents of the issues in question quite often (quickly) side with “their” issue’s “champion” to a significantly greater degree than partisanship alone would predict.

Voters can only make consistent choices if they are armed with enough of the right kind of information. Without campaign activity to guide them, voters often choose in an inconsistent and idiosyncratic manner. When candidates provide information about their priorities, voters respond and a more responsible electorate emerges.

Finally, Chapter 7 demonstrated another important consequence that subpresidential campaigns have for voters. Even when the overall division of the vote remains largely steady over the course of the campaign period, there are often very important changes in the *structure* and *ordering* of the vote which occur over those intervening months — and these changes are often closely tied to the substantive issue environment created by the competing campaigns. Furthermore, even when two candidates of the same party win the same number of votes in the same election cycle, there are often important differences in the ultimate coalitions those candidates assemble — and, again, those differences are often closely related to differences in the substantive issue content featured in the two different races. The information supplied by the campaigns led voters to *assemble themselves* in appropriate coalitions as a result of exposure to those campaign messages. It appears clear that campaigns are often successful in reaching their strategic target groups with the messages those target groups need, and voters in those groups seem to respond quite responsibly on election day.

Particularly in Chapter 6, but also in other portions of the analysis, there is some question as to the direction of causality. I argue that a voter receives messages from a candidate as to the candidate’s issue priorities, and when the voter perceives that the candidate’s priorities match his own, the voter becomes more likely to support that candidate. It is possible, however, that a candidate has recruited the voter by some other appeal; it might be based on some other issue, or perhaps just some idiosyncratic matter that even the voter himself can’t consciously identify. Perhaps the voter’s neighbor met the candidate once, and has raved about “what a great guy” this candidate is. Impressed, and with no other information available, the voter sides with the candidate on this basis alone. Later, after learning more about the candidate’s issue priorities, the voter parrots the candidate’s priorities as his own. Now suppose that this process was widespread, among many voters, and continued over time. The result, in the survey data, would be an increasing correspondence between mentioning a given candidate's signature issue as a top priority and voting for that candidate — which is exactly the result I found and contended was the result of voters starting with a fixed issue agenda and coming to side with the voter who advocates that agenda. Which way, then, does the causal arrow point?

Such a question could be answered more clearly with panel data than with the cross-sectional survey data I have. With a panel study, the researcher could observe the number of individual voters changing, between Time 1 and Time 2, the issue they claim to be most important and the candidate they are supporting. If the causal arrow goes in the direction I believe it does, the issues chosen as most important at Time 1 should remain important at Time 2, and those Time 1 issue preferences should be more closely connected with the vote at Time 2 than at Time 1. If, however, the causal arrow points the other direction, large numbers of individual voters should change, between Time 1 and Time 2, the issues they profess to be important — while those voters' candidate choices remain constant between Time 1 and Time 2.

I do not have panel data available, and so cannot provide a definitive answer to this question. This question would be an interesting and important avenue of research to pursue in the future. I would argue, however, that to some extent *it doesn't matter* which direction the causal arrow points; it may very well point in both directions simultaneously. There may be some voters who are moved by a candidate's issue appeal to support the candidate; there may be other voters who are moved by their attachment to the candidate to adopt the candidate's issue agenda as their own. *The important, and indisputable, fact is that either way the arrow points, voters have become more consistent in the choices they make.* It is quite possible that a not-insignificant number of voters is so inattentive to politics and so uninterested in current affairs these voters have no fixed issue agenda or preferences about which they care passionately. The spectacle of the campaign finally forces such a voter to focus on the candidates competing for a given office. The voter may find a given candidate attractive for whatever reason, and pledge at least a soft allegiance to that candidate. As time passes, he may pay more attention to the substantive messages from that candidate. At this point, such a voter can decide either (1) that the candidate's priorities are ridiculous, and that the candidate should be abandoned, and that the voter ought to look around for a candidate with more sensible priorities, or (2) that, although he has not previously given political issues much thought, this likeable candidate's priorities are worth pursuing and professing as his own. In either case, campaign-generated information has been provided to the voter — and he has acted upon it to make his own preferences more consistent. Regardless of which initial attachment (to the candidate or to the issue priority) has led him to which other attachment (the issue priority or the candidate*), the campaign process has brought these two attachments together*. Instead of casting a ballot based on idiosyncratic feelings, the voter is now choosing with his various preferences in a stronger alignment.

From a normative perspective, an electorate which collectively connects informed perceptions about candidates with votes for those candidates to a *strong* degree is inherently different from an electorate which chooses candidates with substantially less regard for impressions of those same candidates or the issue priorities those candidates profess. The former has become collectively responsible in making coherent and rational connections between various preferences. Voters have come to clear-headed conclusions as to the important issues facing the polity and the candidate who can best lead them to those desired ends. The latter is more a collection of individual voters, each making largely idiosyncratic decisions about whom to support, with much less reference to where the elected candidate will lead them. This dissertation has demonstrated that subpresidential campaign activity is a key mechanism for assembling, shaping, and bringing about that more responsible electorate.

APPENDIX

Chapter 3 Data Details

The 1994 ballots are stored on 22 magnetic round-reel tapes. The county registrar's office reads ballots onto these reels one precinct at a time; each reel contains roughly 400 precincts. According to the director of operations, there is no bias whatever to the order in which precincts are read — or which precincts' ballots end up on which reels. On election night, ballot boxes are stacked haphazardly around a large room, opened in random order, and the punch cards are fed into card readers (which write to the magnetic tape reels).

I used two complete reels: Reel #4 and Reel #14. I selected the reels I did because (1) neither contained any absentee ballots; and (2) these reels contained the largest number of ballots. After compiling all 861 precincts, I confirmed that they were indeed drawn from all over the County (discussed earlier) and closely matched the County's overall racial profile.

Table A1
Racial Profile of Full County and Sample Precincts: 1990 Census VAP

	Sample Precincts	**Los Angeles County**
Non-Latino White	46.3%	45.6%
Latino	32.4	33.3
Non-Latino Black	10.4	10.8
Non-Latino Asian	10.4	10.8

Furthermore, as Tables A2, A3, and A4 demonstrate, the ballots used in this analysis are highly representative of those cast throughout the County.

Table A2
Measures: Ballots and Official LA County Results

	Ballots			Official L.A. County Results		
Prop #	**Yes**	**No**	**Abstain**	**Yes**	**No**	**Abstain**
181	35.7	64.3	11.5	35.9	64.1	12.6
183	68.5	31.5	16.2	68.1	31.9	14.6
184	73.1	26.9	9.4	73.0	27.0	10.2
185	17.8	82.2	10.1	19.0	81.0	10.9
186	29.5	70.5	7.7	29.3	70.7	8.5
187	55.8	44.2	4.2	56.0	44.0	4.8
188	32.2	67.8	5.3	31.1	68.9	6.0
189	79.5	20.5	11.7	80.7	19.3	12.4
190	63.2	36.8	17.5	64.3	35.7	18.7
191	61.0	39.0	19.5	61.4	36.1	20.8

Table A3
Judicial Retention Races: Ballots and Official LA County Results
"Yes" and "No" are percent of those validly participating for that race

	Ballots			Official L.A. County Results		
Judge	**Yes**	**No**	**Abstain**	**Yes**	**No**	**Abstain**
Richard Aldrich	63.3%	36.7	39.6	63.8%	36.2	41.5
Orville Armstrong	67.5%	32.5	40.2	68.1%	31.9	42.0
Roger Boren	61.4%	38.6	39.7	62%	38	41.5
Norman Epstein	60.1%	39.9	38.3	60.8%	39.2	40.0
Ronald George	58.4%	41.6	38.3	59.3%	40.7	39.8
Margaret Gringnon	62.8%	37.2	40.2	63.3%	36.7	41.9
J. Gary Hastings	68.0%	32.0	39.1	68.4%	31.6	41.0
Joyce Kennard	62.6%	37.4	35.8	63.2%	36.8	37.4
Patti Kitching	62.6%	37.4	39.9	63.1%	36.9	41.0
William Masterson	63.3%	36.7	38.2	63.8%	36.2	40.2
Michael Nott	60.8%	39.2	39.9	61.4%	38.6	41.7
Reuben Ortega	62.4%	37.6	37.8	62.8%	37.2	39.7
Ramona Perez	62.1%	37.9	39	62.6%	37.4	40.7
Steven Stone	61.3%	38.7	40.6	62%	38	42.3
Charles Vogel	67.8%	32.2	39.4	68.5%	31.5	41.1
Kathryn Werdegar	63.2%	36.8	37.6	63.9%	36.1	39.1
Arleigh Woods	60.5%	39.5	39.8	61.2%	38.8	41.6
N. Fred Woods	62.9%	37.1	39.9	63.6%	36.5	41.7
Kenneth Yegan	63.7%	36.3	40.7	64.4%	35.6	42.7

Table A4
Partisan Offices: Ballots and Official LA County Results
"Other" Includes minor parties, invalid punches, and abstentions

	Ballots in Sample			**Official L.A. County Results**		
Office	**GOP**	**Dem**	**Other**	**GOP**	**Dem**	**Other**
Governor	49.8%	46.4	3.8	50.4%	46.1	3.5
Lieutenant Governor	34.7%	58.1	7.2	35.3%	58.1	6.6
Secretary of State	38.7%	50.3	11	39.1%	50.8	10.1
Controller	38.1%	55.9	6	39.2%	55.1	5.7
Treasurer	42.9%	47.2	9.9	44%	46.9	9.1
Attorney General	47.3%	45.9	6.8	48.4%	45.3	6.3
Insurance Commissioner	42.3%	50.7	7	43%	50.2	6.8

Table A5
1994 L.A. County General Election District Candidates, Spending, and Official Vote Percentages

	Democratic Candidate			Republican Candidate			District Classification	N of Ballots
District	Name	Spending	Vote	Name	Spending	Vote		
SD 20	Rosenthal	$ 409,082	58.5	White	$ 86,653	41.5	More Cntstd	16,363
SD 22	Polanco	$ 530,888	68.0	Lee	$ -	23.1	Less Cntstd	9,813
SD 24	Solis	$ 323,104	63.1	Boyer	$ 7,141	32.7	Less Cntstd	11,468
SD 26	Watson	$ 91,179	82.9	Piechowski	$ -	13.6	Less Cntstd	15,086
SD 28	Dills	$ 1,013,548	50.5	Cohen	$ 127,408	42.8	More Cntstd	27,839
SD 29	Mountjoy	$ 239,291	60.0	Hester	$ 28,892	33.0	More Cntstd	26,513
SD 30	Calderon	$ 274,908	67.9	Gow	$ 1,000	32.1	Less Cntstd	14,766
SD 32	Ayala	$ 148,466	69.6	De Vries	$ 5,671	30.4	Less Cntstd	879
AD 36	Hutchins	$ 8,202	24.8	Knight	$ 69,530	69.7	Less Cntstd	17,905
AD 38	Arce	$ 12,743	25.9	Boland	$ 147,208	67.1	Less Cntstd	5,407
AD 39	Katz	$ 297,074	70.6	Fitzgerald	$ 176	29.4	Less Cntstd	5,815
AD 40	Friedman	missing	57.9	Degaetano	$ -	36.3	Less Cntstd	10,548
AD 41	Kuehl	$ 577,347	55.6	Meehan	$ 36,849	41.5	More Cntstd	14,038
AD 42	Knox	$ 537,937	63.7	Davis	$ 38,168	31.7	More Cntstd	13,576
AD 43	Schiff	$ 292,118	43.0	Rogan	$ 451,165	53.7	More Cntstd	12,505
AD 44	Philpott	$ 203,739	41.8	Hoge	$ 735,649	53.3	More Cntstd	16,890
AD 45	Villaraigosa	$ 388,135	65.0	Jung	$ 44,270	28.0	More Cntstd	6,832
AD 46	Caldera	$ 120,550	72.6	Yang	$ -	21.3	Less Cntstd	2,981
AD 47	Murray	$ 148,468	71.8	Leonard	$ 4,280	19.1	Less Cntstd	10,292
AD 48	Archie-Hudson	$ 114,693	100	None			Excluded	4,794
AD 49	Martinez	missing	66.6	Nirschal III	$ 1,018	29.5	Less Cntstd	7,212
AD 50	Escutia	$ 87,151	74.7	Miller	$ 981	22.1	Less Cntstd	3,904
AD 51	Tucker Jr.	$ 240,339	69.6	Michelin	$ 4,265	30.5	Less Cntstd	10,217
AD 52	Murray Jr.	$ 66,474	80.8	Rorex	$ 100	19.2	Less Cntstd	8,415
AD 53	Bowen	$ 335,110	51.2	Sirull	$ 28,729	44.0	More Cntstd	15,921
AD 54	Karnette	$ 288,427	47.1	Kuykendall	missing	47.6	More Cntstd	14,898
AD 55	McDonald	$ 157,314	80.6	None			Excluded	11,918
AD 56	Epple	$ 344,098	43.2	Hawkins	$ 91,119	53.5	More Cntstd	12,883
AD 57	Gallegos	$ 269,723	61.6	Yik	$ 13,445	34.0	Less Cntstd	4,256
AD 58	Napolitano	$ 127,046	59.3	Marymee	$ 9,996	33.6	Less Cntstd	10,862
AD 59	Ashley-Farrand	$ 29,785	34.7	Mountjoy	missing	65.2	More Cntstd	15,753
AD 60	Ramirez	$ 3,987	32.6	Horcher	$ 98,630	61.5	Less Cntstd	10,760
AD 61	Silva	missing	35.9	Aguiar	$ 282,570	64.1	Excluded	879

Table A6
Background Information for Judicial Retention Candidates

Source: Profiles of judges originally published in the Daily Journal and compiled by UCLA Law School Library.

Information on Ballot			Information NOT on Ballot		
Judge	**Ballot Order**	**Position**	**Party**	**Year Appointed**	**Appointed By**
Richard Aldrich	8	Div. 3, Associate Justice	R	1994	Wilson (R)
Orville Armstrong	14	Div. 5, Associate Justice	Unknown	1992	Wilson (R)
Roger Boren	6	Div. 2, Presiding Justice	R	1993	Wilson (R)
Norman Epstein	12	Div. 4, Associate Justice	D	1990	Deukmejian (R)
Ronald George	2	Supreme Ct. Assoc. Justice	R	1991	Wilson (R)
Margaret Gringnon	15	Div. 5, Associate Justice	R	1987	Deukmejian (R)
J. Gary Hastings	13	Div. 4, Associate Justice	R	1993	Wilson (R)
Joyce Kennard	1	Supreme Ct. Assoc. Justice	Unknown	1989	Deukmejian (R)
Patti Kitching	9	Div. 3, Associate Justice	Unknown	1993	Wilson (R)
William Masterson	4	Div. 1, Associate Justice	Unknown	1993	Wilson (R)
Michael Nott	7	Div. 2, Associate Justice	R	1990	Deukmejian (R)
Reuben Ortega	5	Div. 1, Associate Justice	R	1988	Deukmejian (R)
Ramona Perez	16	Div. 5, Associate Justice	D	1993	Wilson (R)
Steven Stone	17	Div. 6, Presiding Justice	D	1982	Brown (D)
Charles Vogel	11	Div. 4, Associate Justice	R	1993	Wilson (R)
Kathryn Werdegar	3	Supreme Ct. Assoc. Justice	R	1994	Wilson (R)
Arleigh Woods	10	Div. 4, Presiding Justice	D	1980	Brown (D)
N. Fred Woods	19	Div. 7, Associate Justice	R	1988	Deukmejian (R)
Kenneth Yegan	18	Div. 6, Associate Justice	R	1990	Deukmejian (R)

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